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IMPOTENCE IN SHAKESPEARE'S TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read,  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores impotence as a controlling theme in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. In chapter one, I argue that, contrary to what many critics believe, the love plot and the martial plot are not disjunct but are closely related. In both plots, the characters lack potency or power over their actions and desires. Militarism legitimizes and glorifies the expression of individual and group aggression at the expense of an internal life. Chapter two shows the failure of both leaders, Priam and Agamemnon, to exercise meaningful authority over the warriors who will respect only military conquest--performance in battle--as an indication of potency. The nature of this military mentality, through which, as Matthew Proser suggests, war becomes a fulfilment not merely an occupation, is the subject of chapter three. The military man becomes identified with his armor; but the armor seeks to conceal the vulnerability of the man contained within it and thus is a shell, a substitute for a true identity. Armor is associated with honor; and honor is a sort of character-armor, which protects the military man from life and deadens him. In chapter four, I try to show how men who have become little more than suits of armor and women whose external beauty is their only value cannot establish a relationship. The military environment forces men and women into an animal-like struggle for power over externals at which they consistently fail.



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# I

## TROILUS AND CRESSIDA AS AN EXPLORATION OF MILITARISM

In Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare is concerned with exploring the nature of militarism. Militarism is the glorification of military ideals in a nation and the embodiment of those ideals in the government of that nation. Militarism functions to vent aggressive tendencies or to express power on the part of both the individual and the nation. Moreover, militarism inevitably precipitates a power struggle; and any power struggle inevitably takes on Machiavellian characteristics. As a consequence, both the environment and the individuals within the environment are corrupted. Troilus and Cressida, though only one chapter in the history of Shakespeare's treatment of Machiavellianism, is Shakespeare's anatomy of power. In order to dramatize power as it affects sex, love, marriage, government, law, authority, policy, fortune, nature, and warfare, in other words, power as it affects all forms of relationships and power as it affects the self, Shakespeare chose a highly popular and well-known narrative, that of the Trojan wars. In the Iliad, Homer gives us heroic figures who subsequently were held up as ideal soldiers and ideal men. By the time Shakespeare was writing, the heroes of the Homeric legends had become in many later versions of the story fairly thoroughly tarnished images,





but the war story had acquired a romantic sub-plot in the love story of Troilus and Cressida as popularized by Chaucer. This plot, too, had become debased during the Middle Ages until it reached its lowest ebb in Henryson's treatment of Cressida as a leprous whore. Partly as a consequence of these developments, the story had strong potential for a study of the effects of power struggles in a military nation and in the private lives of members of that nation.

The story of the Trojan wars is well enough known today, but around 1600 must have been even more familiar: constant re-enactments of the exploits of the Homeric heroes appeared on London stages. Professor Tatlock assembled a list of plays lost and extant on the matter of Troy. He divided his list into four groups: at least two and possibly three plays dealt with the story of the siege in general, ten plays dealt with the story of Troilus and Cressida wholly or in part (in this group Tatlock includes both Shakespeare's play and Dryden's adaptation of it), three plays and part of a fourth dealt with the episode of Ajax's jealousy of Achilles, seven plays (Heywood's Iron Age is listed both here and in category two) dealt with the calamities of some of the Greek chiefs after the fall of Troy. In this last group the popular sympathy for the Trojans, the supposed ancestors of the western Europeans and of the English themselves, is very apparent. In addition, there were at least five non-dramatic works on the subject which appeared between 1587 and 1614. In most of these works, as Francis Fergusson suggests, Troy and Greece were symbolic of contrasting attitudes:



Troy stood for filial piety, family and national honor, loyalty to home and ancestors, while the Greeks represented, rather, the intellect, which is so often dangerous and untrustworthy in its freedom.<sup>1</sup>

A detailed commentary on the literary origins of Shakespeare's play and on works appearing concurrently with it can be found in Robert Kimbrough's Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" and Its Setting. It seems reasonable to assume that, in the face of all the overexposure of the Troy matter, Shakespeare would attempt to write an experimental and quite unusual version of the story. However, Shakespearean criticism has traditionally devoted its energies to bemoaning and to attempting to explain away the existence of what many critics have found to be a terrible blemish on the rest of the Shakespeare canon. Professor Tatlock is quoted by Wyndham Lewis as saying: "Why does he seem to turn Chaucer's sympathy into scorn, Homer's serenity into discord, and his heroism into pettiness?"<sup>2</sup> Most critics have found the play bleak at best and a complete failure at worst. Dryden, for example, in 1679 said:

For the play itself, the author seems to have begun it with some fire; the characters of Pandarus and Thersites are promising enough; but as if he grew weary of his task, after an entrance or two, he lets them fall; and the latter part of the tragedy is nothing but a confusion of drums and trumpets, excursions and alarms. The chief persons, who give name to the tragedy, are left alive; Cressida is false, and is not punished. Yet, after all, because the play was Shakespeare's, and that there appeared in some places of it the admirable genius of the author, I undertook to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried.<sup>3</sup>

In 1922, J. Middleton Murry found it a play in which Shakespeare was unable to "face his own subject." Murry continues:

For a moment he handles the love of Troilus and Cressida firmly, then



he appears to let it drop as though it were unbearable and to turn away to deride the Homeric heroes and the idea of chivalry. In a play which contains, in Ulysses's speeches and Troilus's love addresses, some of Shakespeare's finest poetry, we are struck at the last chiefly by its strange inferiority to Chaucer's wonderful poem.<sup>4</sup>

It is probably significant that those who think the play fails usually make their case by comparing it with other treatments of the same material and by demanding that Shakespeare handle the material in the same way. If we assume instead that Shakespeare quite deliberately made his play different in treatment from Chaucer and Homer, and from his own great tragedies, it may be possible to discover what Shakespeare's intentions were. Twentieth century criticism generally takes a more understanding attitude towards the play. Theodore Spencer in 1936 wrote:

More critics have expressed bewilderment about Troilus and Cressida than about any other of Shakespeare's plays. Coleridge flounders when speaking of it, to Sir Walter Raleigh it is "the despair of all critics who seek in it for unity of purpose or meaning", to Raymond Alden the whole effect of the play is dramatically futile, and the mood is more baffling than the abortive plotting. It is not, he suggests, a drama but merely a series of scenes, whose relation to one another is unexplained.

And yet the play has had many admirers. "Would you learn to know his unfettered spirit", said Goethe of Shakespeare, "read Troilus and Cressida". The poetry and the sentiments, apart from the dramatic structure, have been much praised, and I believe I am right in saying that at the present time the play enjoys a greater popularity among readers of Shakespeare than it ever has before. The complication and interest of its plan, the bitterness of its tone, the apparent futility of its conclusion, all these things are sympathetic to a generation which has found an expression in Ulysses and The Waste Land. . . .<sup>5</sup>

By 1949, T. M. Parrott advised the student to "dismiss the wrangle of critics over the nature of the play and discard whatever memories he may retain of Homer and Chaucer."<sup>6</sup>





Bearing in mind both Parrott's advice quoted above and L. C. Knights' suggestion to consider the whole dramatic pattern of each play, I hope to arrive at a coherent approach to the play. However, before outlining the approach I have used, I want to explain that I consider the work to be a consistent whole. I think this is necessary because one of the strongest areas of criticism of Troilus and Cressida is the one initiated by Coleridge who felt that Shakespeare had taken little pains to connect the two sections of the plot, that is, the war story and the love story. Una Ellis-Fermor in "The Discord of the Spheres" in Frontiers of Drama (1946) said:

The materials of Troilus and Cressida are thus more obviously at war than those of any other play of Shakespeare's, and their discord has been a main factor in persuading its readers of the unevenness of the play, of the inconsistency in quality and treatment of the different parts, attributable, it might be, to indifference or weariness in the writer or to alternating and unreconciled moods of admiration on the one hand and expostulation, disgust, or disillusionment upon the other.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than assume that Shakespeare was bored or fed up, Bernard Beckerman takes a more sophisticated and more sympathetic view of the structure of the play:

Today Troilus and Cressida has assumed the status of a major work. Seen as an "image of chaos" or as an image of a grotesque world where "love is poisoned from the outset," the very features of the play which formerly were regarded as faulty have now come to be seen as strengths.<sup>8</sup>

A close examination of the text illustrates that Troilus and Cressida can indeed be an "image of chaos" without being itself chaos. In Some Versions of Pastoral, first published in 1935, William Empson suggested that Troilus and Cressida had a double plot which did not destroy the unity of the play, but considerably enriched it. Empson





argued:

The two parts make a mutual comparison that illuminates both parties ("love and war are alike") and their large-scale indefinite juxtaposition seems to encourage primitive ways of thought ("Cressida will bring Troy bad luck because she is bad."). This power of suggestion is the strength of the double plot; once you take the two parts to correspond, any character may take on mana because he seems to cause what he corresponds to or be Logos of what he symbolizes. The political theorizing in Troilus (chiefly about loyalty whether to a mistress or the state) becomes more interesting if you take it as a conscious development by Shakespeare of the ideals inherent in the double-plot convention.

It is with this machinery that Troilus compares the sexual with the political standards, and shows both in disruption.<sup>9</sup>

Later in his discussion Empson refers to Wyndham Lewis' observation that in Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare uses the language of love about fighting<sup>10</sup> and, I might add, the language of war about love. The play is filled with images relating the two plot lines. For example, Troilus says in the first few lines: "Why should I war without the walls of Troy/ That find such cruel battle here within?" (I, i, 2-3).<sup>11</sup> Not only does Troilus think of his love for Cressida as a battle situation, he conceives of his conduct in obtaining her as siege warfare. Cressida, who is "the [unvaliant] virgin in the night/ And skilless as unpracticed infancy" (I, i, 11-12) when it comes to protecting her interests, loses the siege. In a later speech the verbal texture reveals even more explicitly the way in which the pleasures of love and war are related in Troilus' mind:

I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.  
Th' imaginary relish is so sweet  
That it enchants my sense. What will it be  
When that the wat'ry palates taste indeed  
Love's thrice-repured nectar? Death, I fear me,  
Sounding destruction, or some joy too fine,



Too subtle, potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness  
 For the capacity of my ruder powers.  
 I fear it much; and I do fear besides  
 That I shall lose distinction in my joys,  
 As doth a battle, when they charge on heaps  
 The enemy flying. (III, ii, 17-28)

Since Empson established the soundness of the double-plot technique, other critics have found this an important aid in interpreting the play. For example, Daniel Seltzer has argued that:

Since the public nature of the state was the background for the action, he [Shakespeare] would have realized that he was combining, for the first time with equal importance, a romantic story with a historical story. Clearly, he desired to indicate a parallel between the betrayal of love that ends the former and the disintegration of heroism that ends the latter.<sup>12</sup>

And R. P. Blackmur finds that, "War comments love [sic] and makes it folly, love comments war [sic] and makes it extravagant; each undermines the commitment in the other."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the above quoted critical opinion, representative of a fairly substantial body, refutes Hardin Craig's suggestion that "It is doubtful whether any unity of purpose or mood can be discovered in Troilus and Cressida."<sup>14</sup> However, this is not to deny that the play is about the powerful forces of disorder which can sweep through a society, intimate personal relationships, and, finally, the self. D. A. Traversi calls disorder the real theme of the play.<sup>15</sup> I. A. Richards has said that it is a play about the state of man in insurrection.<sup>16</sup> Daniel Seltzer has said it is about the disruption of constancy in love and war.<sup>17</sup>

As might be expected, productions of the play have not done much to settle the dispute over the question of the unity of the text. Bernard



Beckerman feels that the fact that the play was so long disliked and unproduced makes it a play with great potential for the modern director:

For the stage director Troilus and Cressida is virtually a new work. It is not burdened by a long-standing theatrical or critical tradition. It has features which speak directly to a contemporary audience. Though the story is ancient, the atmosphere is modern, and that is a decided advantage for a director.<sup>18</sup>

Beckerman is definitely in a minority group, for the majority of critics have found the play nearly unperformable. The Times in reviewing the 1907 London performance (the first staging in modern times in English) concluded: "The main result of the interesting experiment was the conviction that it is impossible to arrange this play for the stage. . . that it is better left unacted and read in the study."<sup>19</sup> Daniel

Seltzer suggests that:

In producing Troilus and Cressida for the stage, this quality of experimentation, of searching for form, comes to the director when he first tries to develop an overall conception of the action and the general style that should guide him when rehearsals begin, but he is likely to discover early in his efforts that this play defies such an attempt. This is why Troilus and Cressida, perhaps more frequently than any other play by Shakespeare, succumbs in preparation to that last effort of the desperate director, a striking form of modern dress. The modern theater has seen Troilus in Edwardian dress, modish evening clothes, Wild West costumes, and the uniforms of the American Civil War; and there is little doubt that such aberrations occur (invariably in the name of originality or "significance to the modern audience") because the director, in forgivable despair, has begun to mistrust the text itself.<sup>20</sup>

It is my feeling that costuming presents a particular problem for a director who wishes to modernize Troilus and Cressida for the stage.

For example, a recent Ruhr festival production employed khaki and white uniforms. For this production, since Achilles was costumed as an aging hippie and another character made up to resemble General Ky, perhaps





Viet Nam war uniforms would have been even more effective to convey the desperate futility of prolonged war. However, what one then makes of all the references to chivalric conduct and suits of armor is really quite difficult to imagine.

The 1968 Royal Shakespeare Company production which I was able to attend is the most recent important production of the play. It attempted to strike a compromise between the modern and traditional approaches and for that reason had some success with the play. The dress was traditional while the psychological treatment was modern. It had been the designer's intention to have the warriors dressed in suits of armor which, as I hope to make clear as I explain my approach to the play, would most nearly suit the requirements of the script. However, when it was found that the armor would consume ten thousand of the fourteen thousand pounds allotted to the production, a combination of skimpy skirts (resembling kilts) and body-building exercises for the actors was substituted. Pandarus, Priam, and the female characters appeared in draped, flowing garments traditionally associated with the Greeks. Thersites' costume emphasized the stress on perversion that has characterized the most recent productions of the play. It consisted of a pair of shorts with a long red unsightly phallus sewn to the front. Make-up was used to indicate the open sores and blemishes on Thersites' body. The actor employed a bent-over stance and rather jerky body movements. Achilles' costume was striking because he was the only warrior who was fully covered; all the others were largely nude. His long flowing robes, long blonde hair tied into a fancy tail and perfumed appearance suggested





one of the "screaming fairy queens" referred to in The Boys in the Band. Although his gestures were not as "camp" as Emory's in The Boys in the Band, they were certainly far too effeminate to suggest a powerful warrior capable of inspiring disaffection throughout the army. In one brief wordless scene, added gratuitously by the director, Achilles and Thersites vigorously mock-copulated, employing the phallus on Thersites' costume. A tambourine punctuated the action. This scene was presumably intended to indicate more explicitly the activities in Achilles' tent which Shakespeare has Ulysses describe. An abrupt and deliberate pretence of virility occurred later when Achilles appeared preceded by rolling mist and flanked by his hissing Myrmidons behind a row of huge shields. Though this scene was quite effective on stage, I do not agree with the director's interpretation of Achilles' role as a whole. The references to the alleged homosexuality of Achilles and Patroclus are quite ambiguous in Shakespeare's play; they do not justify the heavy emphasis which this production placed on homosexuality. It could be inferred that the intention was to draw crowds rather than to interpret Shakespeare soundly.

Some aspects of the production were quite satisfactory. The filmy sensual gowns of Helen and Cressida and the absence of under-clothing beneath them stressed the blatant sexuality of the play. So did the lascivious style of acting found particularly in the scenes connected with the love plot. For example, in the scene in which Pandarus identifies for Cressida the returning Trojan warriors, Cressida stretched and writhed erotically, while straddling a bench. Finally,



Pandarus straddled Cressida, both of them gasping with laughter. The production as a whole emphasized that once off the battlefield the warriors are interested only in erotic exploits. And this is an emphasis which the text bears out. As Jan Kott says: "The [Midsummer Night's] Dream is the most erotic of Shakespeare's plays. In no other tragedy or comedy of his, except Troilus and Cressida, is the eroticism expressed so brutally."<sup>21</sup>

Turning directly to the text, let us ask what Shakespeare is trying to do in this play. Shakespeare begins his play with a speech which mentions two wars. Troilus says:

Call here my varlet, I'll unarm again.  
 Why should I war without the walls of Troy  
 That find such cruel battle here within?  
 (I, i, 1-3)

The external war is one of "high blood chaf'd" provoked by the rape of Helen who "with wanton Paris sleeps," as described in the prologue to the Folio edition:

In Troy there lies the scene. From isles of Greece  
 The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed,  
 Have to the port of Athens sent their ships,  
 Fraught with the ministers and instruments  
 Of cruel war. Sixty and nine, that wore  
 Their crownets regal, from th' Athenian bay  
 Put forth toward Phrygia; and their vow is made  
 To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures  
 The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen,  
 With wanton Paris sleeps--and that's the quarrel.  
 (Prologue: 1-10)

The internal war is the one mentioned by Troilus; it is the struggle of every man to be "master of his heart." To be master of his heart is not simply to be in control of a single love relationship, but to



control the warring humours or passions within the individual which affect both public and private conduct. Troilus' attitude (which is conditioned by his military role in life) is that this external war is nobler. He bemoans the fact that his passions have sapped his strength and kept him away from battle, the more noble field of endeavor. In fact, Troilus rejects himself as womanish because he cannot move to battle outside the walls and is caught up by his passion for Cressida. He says:

The Greeks are strong, and skillful to their strength,  
Fierce to their skill, and to their fierceness valiant;  
But I am weaker than a woman's tear,  
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,  
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,  
And skilless as unpracticed infancy.  
(I, i, 7-12)

Both the external and the internal war have a sexual cause: the one to protect Paris' mistress, the other to procure Troilus' mistress.

Norman O. Brown, the Freudian thinker, would see both possibilities open to Troilus as false wars. In Love's Body, Brown says that "peace lies in finding the true war," which is the war with the self:

War is war perverted. The problem is not the war but the perversion. And the perversion is a repression; war is sex perverted. "War is energy Enslav'd." . . . War is what happens to the weak, the impotent; so that they might at least be touched with the lowest form of violence; or as the death decreed for those who run away from battle. . . . The thing, then, is not to abolish war but to find the true war. Open the hidden Heart in Wars of Mutual Benevolence, Wars of Love.<sup>22</sup>

King Lear can also be seen as dealing with external and internal wars.

Lear's character gains tragic dimensions through a war with his own soul. On the other hand, lesser characters in the same play, for ex-





ample, Goneril and Regan, are engaged in external wars. Goneril and Regan seek control over their father's kingdom and eventual sexual mastery of Edmund. The resulting competition destroys both. Theirs is the same struggle for external power which consumes the characters in Troilus and Cressida.

Interestingly enough, all the characters in Troilus and Cressida avoid the inner war. Therefore, none can rise to the level of tragedy. Rather than simply rejecting the play as a failure, one could ask why the characters avoid this inner war. During the ten years' siege of Troy, both Trojans and Greeks are dominated by the militaristic mentality; and, whereas (at least in the view of most critics) Homer saw this military mentality as potently heroic, Shakespeare sees it as impotent. At the time the play begins, the war has reached a stalemate. Leaders in both camps search for reasons for their failure to bring the war to a successful conclusion. Yet, in the face of no satisfactory explanation, there remains a sense that the land is under a curse. Jessie Weston says that in the waste-land myth, once the fisher king has become impotent (through age, sexual impotence, or inability to rule, in the various versions of the legend), the land is laid waste and awaits the arrival of a young knight who will restore fertility. The knights who move through Shakespeare's wasteland are themselves impotent (though not in a literal sense), and there is no restoration of fertility. In an environment corrupted by militarism, recovery is impossible. Aspects of the mythical young knight who may





be able to restore fertility can be seen in Achilles, Hector, and Troilus. But each chooses, or is forced by his environment, to maintain his personal impotence so that the land cannot be saved. Achilles through his debased love for Patroclus seeks revenge through murder. Hector abandons his understanding to maintain a pretence of chivalry. Troilus turns his love for Cressida into hatred for Diomed and seeks revenge.

R. P. Blackmur approaches the play through a key word "infatuation":

Shakespeare was a master of infatuation--as Proust was a master of jealousy--both in his poems and his plays. I do not mean just the infatuation in love; I mean that he was master of several modes of that masterless power which seizes on the statesman, or the man with a doctrine, as well as the lover, and contorts him beyond his own reason and his own hope without his ever quite losing the pinch of reason or the inner qualm of hope.<sup>23</sup>

I prefer to approach the play through the word "impotence," not in the narrowly literal sense of sexual impotence, but in the broader sense that the characters in the play lack power or potency over their actions and desires. Every action attempted fizzles out or becomes a parody or perversion of itself. Simple sexual prowess is shown as adequate only to maintain a lustful relationship, not to produce a stable, full and rewarding love-relationship, which is what Troilus talks about having. So there is a kind of impotence illustrated there. In public life, authority is unable to assert any power or strength and unable to inspire strong affection. We can, therefore, describe Agamemnon as an impotent ruler. I prefer the term "impotence"



because it is a more embracing term than "infatuation" and enables the political problems and sexual problems in the play to be more easily discussed together; in other words, it facilitates an analysis of the play as a double plot.

The central political problem of the play is the central political problem which faces any society: unification of the society. Ideal political unity could exist only if the ruler had no exploitative motives; that is, if his mastery were fused at all times with benevolent love. Much of the Shakespeare canon is concerned with the problems created when the ruler attempts a satanic short-cut to potency, yielding to the Machiavellian notion that political mastery is valuable for its own sake. The history plays demonstrate repeatedly that pure power, power for its own sake, is satanic; this is made most explicit perhaps in Richard III, where Richard is called a devil. The function of demonic power is to disease the body politic by dividing the head from the remainder of the body politic. By creating a division, perverted potency devitalizes the body. Mere political power becomes an ironic mocking of itself in its saprophytic attempt to devour the corpse it creates out of the body politic.

In an attempt to avoid satanic corruptions of true potency, medieval thinkers maintained that the king's authority was divinely sanctioned and that the authority of the Godhead flowed through the king into the veins of the body politic, creating a sacred society. Shakespeare in his history plays continually shows that, however incapable the divinely sanctioned leader, usurpation of his authority stops the



sacral flow into the sublunary world. For example, in Richard II, the result of Bolingbroke's usurpation is guilt which relentlessly taunts an otherwise competent man. The usurper, because his power is not sacred, must use Machiavellian methods to maintain his position. A Machiavellian action is an attempt to conceal, but, in contrast to what Bolingbroke hopes, there is no way in which his guilt can be concealed or can be prevented from passing on to his son. The attempt to conceal the illegitimacy of the source of his authority is what divides Henry V from possible divine sanction.

In this light, Henry V can hardly be considered an ideal king. Nor can he be considered an ideal man: the actions of Hal in parts one and two of Henry IV demonstrate Hal's ability to waste time with the comic rebels when filial duty would suggest that his place is with his father who is attempting to offset the corrosion of power by serious rebels. Hal's rebellious ways do not indicate a shift towards greater wisdom which would consist in seeing through the usurpation and rejecting the stolen crown. Initially, he is simply irresponsible; later, Machiavellian. So Hal fails consistently; he always seeks a perverted potency. In fact, Richard II's cry, "I wasted time, now it wastes me," hangs over the irresponsible activities of the dissolute young prince. Such tactics as he has are consciously Machiavellian. He will bide his time and will appear a far brighter sun once these clouds of his youth disappear. Further, he will pluck Hotspur's brilliant military honour from his corpse and add it to the crown which the dying Henry IV refers to as his honour. Finally, Shakespeare adds a deft





Machiavellian touch to the portrait in having Hal make capital out of his father's death-bed advice to protect his position by involving in a foreign war what would otherwise be warring humours within the body politic. Henry V can be described as a play about perverted potency because Hal maintains his power through successful manipulation of the hierarchy and by shucking off his inappropriate associations. He involves the nation in his devitalizing actions when he induces nationalistic fervor through the rape of France. His rule, then, produces a distorted unity, one which is achieved through subjection of another country and in which each man shares in the power gained through subjection.

Political impotence is the failure of pure power; it is failed tyranny. In that sense, Troilus and Cressida is a play about impotence. Though Agamemnon has no guilt contaminating his rule, his personal inadequacies undermine his rule in the same way these inadequacies undermined Richard II's rule. Ulysses reasserts the medieval theory of order and degree in the play. But simple compliance with the requisites of this political ideology will not ensure Agamemnon of any more success as ruler than Richard II had. In addition, Agamemnon makes a foolish decision to involve himself and sixty-four other princes and their men in an immoral and irresponsible war. The complaints of his men are somewhat reminiscent of those of Henry V's men before Agincourt. But Henry V is neither foolish nor incompetent. Agamemnon is both. For that reason he accepts Ulysses' suggestion of political manipulation of a Machiavellian sort as a means for Agamemnon to regain power in the Greek





camp. Thus, while Ulysses' speech is an affirmation of the medieval view, Ulysses' ultimate suggestion and the total action of the play act to undermine the medieval theory by a demonstration of its ineffectiveness. This misuse of power which Ulysses himself engages in becomes an appetite seeking to devour itself. The irony here is that Ulysses who points it out falls victim to it in that his schemes go awry, and Achilles reasserts his debased power at the end of the play. The point of using the Troy story as the vehicle for this demonstration might be that it is one of the most famous stories conventionally (and, in Shakespeare's view, mistakenly) seen as a demonstration of the "glories" of war. Shakespeare sees not only the Trojan wars and their heroes, but all wars, as unheroic. Just as Robert Lowell, in a recent trilogy entitled The Old Glory, drains the glory from America's past, so Shakespeare in Troilus and Cressida drains the glory out of the Troy events.



## II

### THE HEAD VERSUS THE HAND: THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

In this chapter, it is my intention to explore what I believe to be the source of the problems plaguing the Greek and Trojan camps. Failure of authority--both kingly and parental--is really the cause of all the difficulties the plot elaborates. Perhaps the most distinctive impression the play creates is one of a land laid waste and a series of lives destroyed because of a futile war. Certainly this is the point that critics repeatedly return to whether they are condemning the personal despair of Shakespeare and what they call the depressing view of humanity the play gives or praising the modernity--the almost existential anguish--of a world torn asunder by absurd forces as Jan Kott would suggest. I have already mentioned the waste-land myth but I think it necessary to present Miss Weston's views in some further detail. The medieval romances about the Grail Quest have, she says, recurrent features that can be grouped under certain definite headings:

(a) There is a general consensus of evidence to the effect that the main object of the Quest is the restoration to health and vigour of a King suffering from infirmity caused by wounds, sickness, or old age;

(b) and whose infirmity, for some mysterious and unexplained reason, reacts disastrously upon his kingdom, either depriving it of vegetation, or exposing it to the ravages of war.

(c) In two cases it is definitely stated that the King will be restored to youthful vigour and beauty.



(d) In both cases where we find Gawain as the hero of the story, and in one connected with Perceval, the misfortune which has fallen upon the country is that of a prolonged drought, which has destroyed vegetation, and left the land waste; the effect of the hero's question is to restore the waters to their channel, and render the land once more fertile.

(e) In three cases the misfortunes and wasting of the land are the result of war, and directly caused by the hero's failure to ask the question. . . .

But this much seems certain, the aim of the Grail Quest is twofold; it is to benefit (a) the King, (b) the land. The first of these two is the more important, as it is the infirmity of the King which entails misfortune on his land, the condition of the one reacts, for good or ill, upon the other; how, or why, we are left to discover for ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

There are certain parallels between the medieval romances and the Shakespeare play. Like the Fisher King, Priam is an aged and weak king; and his weakness, as I shall show, has reacted disastrously upon the kingdom, helping to cause the war with the Greeks. Beyond this point the parallels break down. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, none of the knights in Shakespeare's play is able to restore order to this ravaged land. Also, these knights have no conception that they are on a quest; they are merely out to gain personal glory. There are innumerable other differences: Shakespeare's play, although mythical archetypes stand behind it, is a totally different work of art from a medieval romance.

Priam as king retains a great deal of ostensible authority. Though the members of the Trojan court are aware of his advanced age, there is no suggestion that any one of his sons should replace him as king. But, for one with so secure a position, Priam is a curiously silent, almost absent authority. During the crucial Trojan council scene





(II, ii), it is almost possible to forget that Priam is present and king. He introduces the subject under discussion, but does so neutrally, with no indication of his own feelings:

After so many hours, lives, speeches spent,  
Thus once again says Nestor from the Greeks:  
"Deliver Helen, and all damage else,  
As honor, loss of time, travail, expense,  
Wounds, friends, and what else dear that is consumed  
In hot digestion of this cormorant war,  
Shall be struck off." Hector, what say you to't?  
(II, ii, 1-7)

Priam's request for Hector's opinion is not at all accidental. Because of the honour attendant on his military abilities, Hector's opinions carry great weight in the council. Hector uses his authority to support Priam's prestige. A later speech draws attention to the relationship of father and son:

Lay hold upon him, Priam, hold him fast;  
He is thy crutch. Now if thou lose thy stay,  
Thou on him leaning, and all Troy on thee,  
Fall all together. (V, iii, 59-62)

Cassandra's imagery in this speech is incisive in indicating the way in which the war has undermined the authority of the king who caused it in favour of the warrior who thrives in it. The image of the crutch suggests the crippled authority or impotence of Priam. Power, which ostensibly resides in Priam's judgment, actually resides in Hector's body. The state is more dependent on Hector than on Priam.

In spite of his weakness, Priam encounters little opposition or difficulty with his sons. It would seem, though, that this is because such opposition is unnecessary. Priam either supports his sons





in what they want or opposes them ineffectively. For example, the rape of Helen represents a concurrence of the lust of Paris and the desire for vengeance of the Trojan court as personified by Priam. Troilus tells us that the theft of Helen was a reprisal for the earlier theft of Hesione, an aged aunt who, according to Homer, remained happily with the Greeks:

It was thought meet  
 Paris should do some vengeance on the Greeks.  
 Your breath with full consent bellied his sails;  
 The seas and winds, old wranglers, took a truce  
 And did him service; he touched the ports desired,  
 And for an old aunt whom the Greeks held captive  
 He brought a Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness  
 Wrinkles Apollo's and makes pale the morning.  
 (II, ii, 72-79)

Later in the scene Paris says that had he not had the support of the council, he could not have undertaken such a fearsome project. On one of the few occasions in the play when he speaks out, Priam says:

Paris, you speak  
 Like one besotted on your sweet delights.  
 You have the honey still, but these the gall;  
 So to be valiant is no praise at all.  
 (II, ii, 142-145)

In rebuking Paris for being blind to the communal suffering caused by the pursuit of personal welfare, Priam seems to be moving towards a position which opposes the war. In fact, however, Priam is not; he is attempting to dismiss any hint that appetite entered into what he would like to view as a rational political decision. The proof that he is not really opposed to the war comes when Priam fails to second Hector's suggestion that Helen be returned, let alone make such a suggestion



himself. Priam has given his consent to an immoral and irresponsible act of vengeance which provoked and created an environment beyond repair. Because of his deep involvement in that act of vengeance, he cannot now speak in favour of returning Helen without a considerable loss in prestige.

Despite Priam's attempt to make the theft of Helen seem rational, Priam has, in fact, allowed the will of the state to become simply the hand of appetite. As a head, he has rendered himself impotent and allowed the passions which the head is supposed to control to run wild. In the 1968 Royal Shakespeare Company production, Priam was depicted as almost blind. Certainly in a figurative sense he is blind, and blindness is often used as a symbol of impotence. Priam seems unable to "see" that they are working out their own destruction. Hector speaks out against their course of action:

Nature craves  
 All dues be rendered to their owners. Now,  
 What nearer debt in all humanity  
 Than wife is to the husband? If this law  
 Of nature be corrupted through affection,  
 And that great minds, of partial indulgence  
 To their benumbed wills, resist the same,  
 There is a law in each well-ordered nation  
 To curb those raging appetites that are  
 Most disobedient and refractory.  
 If Helen, then, be wife to Sparta's king,  
 As it is known she is, these moral laws  
 Of nature and of nations speak aloud  
 To have her back returned. Thus to persist  
 In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,  
 But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion  
 Is this in way of truth.

(II, ii, 173-189)



Hector's reasoned defense of natural law is supported by Helenus' simple statement: "Should not our father/ Bear the great sway of his affairs with reason. . . ." (II, ii, 34-35). But the reasoned argument of Hector cannot prevail over the passionate arguments of Paris and Troilus. Finally, Hector, too, yields to the impassioned persuasion of Troilus.

Later in the play, Priam seems even more impotent in the face of any kind of difficulty. Cassandra has appealed to Priam to protect his and Troy's crutch--namely, Hector--by keeping Hector out of battle. Priam says:

Come, Hector, come; go back.  
 Thy wife hath dreamt, thy mother hath had visions,  
 Cassandra doth foresee, and I myself  
 Am like a prophet suddenly enrapt  
 To tell thee that this day is ominous.  
 Therefore, come back.  
 (V, iii, 59-64)

Hector replies:

Aeneas is afield;  
 And I do stand engaged to many Greeks,  
 Even in the faith of valor, to appear  
 This morning to them.  
 (V, iii, 65-68)

Priam attempts to stand firm: "Ay, but thou shalt not go." But when Hector again insists on going, Priam says nothing more in spite of further appeals from both Cassandra and Andromache. Priam's all too easy deference to Hector underscores his own lack of power.

Priam's employment of Paris and his implication of all the





members of the state in a personal vendetta seems irresponsible enough. But what is also significant is the form which that revenge takes. The theft of Helen is seen by the other characters in the play as a proof that Menelaus was not manly enough to keep her. The theft, in other words, is a symbolic castration of Menelaus, who is subsequently mocked by both Greeks and Trojans. The theft is also a symbolic castration of the Greek state. The play shows very clearly the nature of political prestige: prestige is the appearance of potency; loss of prestige is symbolic castration. The linking of prestige with military and sexual prowess is also found in the first chapter of Homer's Iliad, where a quarrel over Agamemnon's slave girl (Chryseis) sets Achilles against Agamemnon. Chryses, priest of Phoebus Apollo and father of Chryseis, offers a ransom for his daughter but is repulsed and insulted by Agamemnon. Chryses then appeals to Phoebus Apollo, who inflicts a deadly plague on Agamemnon's army. In council, under the protection of Achilles, Calchas, the seer, reveals Agamemnon's responsibility for the plague. This disclosure provokes the rage of Agamemnon against both Calchas and Achilles. Agamemnon is angered by the necessity to return Chryseis because he is even fonder of her than of his consort Clytaemnestra. But more than that, he views her loss as entailing a loss in prestige:

"Give up the girl," you say, hoping, I presume, to keep your own prize safe. Do you expect me tamely to sit by while I am robbed? No; if the army is prepared to give me a fresh prize, chosen to suit my taste and to make up for my loss, I have no more to say. If not, I shall come and help myself to your [Achilles'] prize, or that of Aias; or I shall walk off with Odysseus's. And what an angry man I shall leave behind





me!<sup>2</sup>

Possession of the slave-girl is here symbolic of prowess: if Agamemnon does not replace his loss of her, his real prowess or ability will remain the same; but his prestige or symbolic prowess will shrink considerably, and with it his authority in the camp. That the same principle applies with regard to the cause of the war is shown by both Homer and Shakespeare. The abduction of Helen does not make the Greek state weaker than it was; but it makes it symbolically weaker. These symbolic differences are at least as important in the minds of both Greeks and Trojans as other differences. Troilus, in Shakespeare's play, suggests that the Trojans have outdone the Greeks because they have captured a more worthwhile prize than Priam's old sister. Troilus' view of political action between states as a simple game of one-upmanship is condoned by Priam.

In addition to committing his state to a ludicrous war, Priam condones Paris' and Helen's openly wanton relationship. Moreover he has allowed her to become a symbol of honor and womanhood for the state of Troy. Even when Troilus elevates her into a symbol of everything that Troy and, therefore, that Priam's kingship stands for, Priam does not object. Given this kind of kingship, there is no question that Troy will fall.

Aristotle says that the primal model for political government is the patriarchal family. Priam's impotence as a king parallels his impotence as a father. The factors which seem to contribute to Priam's



impotence as king are his age, his inability to "see" right courses of action, and his inability to exert a positive force over his city. These factors result in his failure as a responsible parent. One of Machiavelli's basic themes is that the imitation of great men is natural to man and shapes history. Within the family, too, imitation of the father is the primary way that sons learn and mature; the father becomes a model of manhood. Priam, rather than directing his sons toward choices which demand the self-discipline that the reason can exert over the passions, encourages and supports the satisfaction of their appetites. In the case of Hector, it is an appetite for military glory. In the case of Paris, it is an appetite for wantonness. In the case of Troilus, it is a combination of the appetites of Hector and Paris. Troilus, then, wants the best of what have been set up as the two significant courses of action for a Trojan prince. Priam's other three sons--Helenus, Deiphobus, and the bastard Margelon--play lesser roles in the action of the play. All three participate in the fighting. Helenus, who voices objections to the war, compromises his own values (Helenus is a priest) by participating in the war.

In their references to Priam, the sons always indicate respect for him. Curiously enough, Troilus on two occasions indicates some fear of Priam. In the first scene of the play, Troilus tells Pandarus that he must conceal his love for Cressida, "Lest Hector or my father should perceive me" (I, ii, 38). This statement, by the way, implies the division in power between Hector and Priam which I have mentioned previously. Later, in the council scene, Troilus in challenging Hector's



suggestion that Helen is not worth the cost of keeping her says:

Weigh you the worth and honor of a king  
 So great as our dread [*italics mine*] father in a scale  
 Of common ounces?

(II, ii, 26-28)

But Priam's speeches in the play do not bear out this idea that Troilus has something to fear from him. The only time during the play when Priam is openly opposed to something a son of his is doing, he backs down quickly. In this case, it is Hector whom he cannot pressure into staying out of battle; yet it is Hector's loyalty which protects his position for as long as Priam does not oppose anything Hector wants. Machiavelli insists that to maintain power it is necessary to satisfy the needs of those who might otherwise rebel against the source of authority. Paradoxically, an impotent king remains in power because he renders rebellion unnecessary by never repressing appetites or opposing desires.

The damage to Priam's state through his failure to support natural laws (by respecting the marriage of Helen and Menelaus) has already been examined. The damage to his own family is equally real. First of all, Troilus has lost his respect for natural law, so that he lets his love for Cressida take an illicit course. Troilus and his brothers are so brainwashed by the ideal of military honor that they expose themselves recklessly to death. The father, who should protect his sons, has instead created danger. Finally Troilus' mother makes secret attempts to protect her sons by extracting a promise from Achilles to avoid any further combat in return for retaining the love of Polyxena.





But Hecuba's efforts are frustrated by the success of Hector and Troilus in battle. Their success drives both Achilles and Ajax to arm in spite of themselves and to begin the destruction of Troy. The failure of Hecuba's efforts and the success of Hector and Troilus (which leads to Hector's death and the downfall of Troy) reveal the paradoxical power of Priam's impotence.

As King, Priam acts as a model for fatherhood in Troy. Here, again, Machiavelli's notion that men imitate the conduct of others is relevant: Priam's attitudes work against the preservation of life or worthwhile values both in the case of his children and in the case of his subjects. Calchas, Cressida's father, imitates Priam's failure as a father. In fleeing to the Greek camp on the basis of his prophecy of the fall of Troy, Calchas is more than a traitor to Troy and an opportunist. He is remiss in his responsibilities toward his daughter because he abandons her to the care of Pandarus. Pandarus, who is delegated to educate the girl, does nothing but more deeply instill the debased values of the nation she lives in. In Act One, scene two, he attempts to strengthen Cressida's sexual appetite by discussing at some length the manhood of Troilus and the flirtations of Helen at court. Just as Calchas is traitor to Troy, Pandarus is traitor to Cressida: he releases her to Troilus, who is besieging her for her love. Later, when Calchas gets Cressida transferred to the Greek camp, he betrays her in the same way. He facilitates rather than discourages her sexual promiscuity by taking her to the tent of Menelaus (where she symbolically re-



places Helen) and then later by encouraging her meeting with Diomed. It should be noted that Calchas is in a rather difficult position as far as protecting Cressida is concerned: although he cannot clearly see how corrupt Troy is, he knows that Troy will be destroyed and does want to protect his daughter from that destruction. But he chooses to put her into a worse environment than the decaying one she has left.

In this play there is no example of a good father to set against these examples of bad fathers. But Prospero in The Tempest provides such an example. Prospero has power over himself, the island and his daughter. As a consequence he can require successfully of Ferdinand that he respect Miranda's honor until their union is sanctified. Prospero will neither encourage the course of passion over reason as Priam does, nor cooperate in a base assignation as Calchas does. It must be remembered, though, that the kind of "ideal" influence that Prospero is able to exert exists because of his unique situation--one in which Prospero has supernatural powers over his environment. Therefore, the whole comparison is one of a dream-like situation with a "realistic" situation.

I have spoken about an ideal form of kingship and fatherhood--exemplified, in part, by Prospero--in which reason and love combine to guide political action. In the history plays in particular, Shakespeare is at pains to show the complex tension between ideal conduct (the level of conduct which is somehow expected of a king because he is thought of as superhuman) and what is possible because kings turn out to be human



after all. Henry V, in disguise, explains the humanity of the king to his soldiers at Agincourt:

For though I speak it to you, I think the  
King is but a man, as I am. The violet  
smells to him as it doth to me; all his  
senses have but human conditions. His cer-  
emonies laid by, in his nakedness he  
appears but a man; and though his affections  
are higher mounted than ours, yet, when they  
stoop, they stoop with the like wing. There-  
fore, when he sees reason of fears as we do,  
his fears, out of doubt, be of the same rel-  
ish as ours are; yet, in reason, no man should  
possess him with any appearance of fear, lest  
he, by showing it, should dishearten his army.  
(Henry V: IV, i, 103-117)

In Troilus and Cressida, which shows the same tension between the ideal and the real, Shakespeare has placed a speech which summarizes very forcefully the ideals of kingship and orderly government. One of the most famous set speeches in the entire Shakespeare canon, Ulysses' speech on order and degree has become not only a primary device for examining the events of this play, but has been used quite extensively by critics to examine the theme of kingship in other Shakespeare plays. Consequently, E. M. W. Tillyard chose to make this speech one of the basic sources for his book, The Elizabethan World Picture. The speech is the sort of ringing latinate rhetoric that people like to think of as the essence of Shakespeare:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this center  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office, and custom, in all line of order.  
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol  
In noble eminence enthroned and sphered





Amidst the other; whose med'cinable eye  
 Corrects the influence of evil planets,  
 And posts, like the commandment of a king,  
 Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets  
 In evil mixture to disorder wander,  
 What plagues, and what portents, what mutiny,  
 What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,  
 Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,  
 Divert and crack, rend and deracinate  
 The unity and married calm of states  
 Quite from their fixure? O, when degree is shaken,  
 Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
 The enterprise is sick. How could communities,  
 Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
 Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
 The primogenity and due of birth,  
 Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,  
 But by degree, stand in authentic place?  
 Take but degree away, untune that string,  
 And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets  
 In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters  
 Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores  
 And make a sop of all this solid globe;  
 Strength should be lord of imbecility,  
 And the rude son should strike his father dead;  
 Force should be right, or rather right and wrong--  
 Between whose endless jar justice resides--  
 Should lose their names, and so should justice too.  
 Then everything include itself in power,  
 Power into will, will into appetite,  
 And appetite, an universal wolf,  
 So doubly seconded with will and power,  
 Must make perforce an universal prey  
 And last eat up himself. Great Agamemnon,  
 This chaos, when degree is suffocate,  
 Follows the choking.

(I, iii, 85-125)

Tillyard quotes the above passage (with slight omissions) and then makes the following statement with regard to it:

The point here is that so many things are included simultaneously within this "degree" or order, and so strong a sense is given of their inter-connexions. The passage is at once cosmic and domestic. The sun, the king, primogeniture hang together; the war of the planets is echoed by the war of the elements and by civil war on earth; the homely brother-





hoods or guilds in cities are found along with an oblique reference to creation out of the confusion of chaos. Here is a picture of immense and varied activity, constantly threatened with dissolution, and yet preserved from it by a superior, unifying power. The picture, however, though so rich, is not complete. There is nothing about God and the angels, nothing about animals vegetables and minerals [sic]. For Shakespeare's dramatic purposes he brought in quite enough, but it would be wrong to think that he did not mean to imply the two extremes of creation also or that he would have disclaimed the . . . account of "degree". . . .<sup>3</sup>

Later in his book, Tillyard says that, "The Elizabethans pictured the universal order under three main forms: a chain, a series of corresponding planes, and a dance."<sup>4</sup> His book is concerned with explaining Elizabethan cosmogony, primarily under these headings. He sees the Elizabethan world as a simplified version of the theocentric medieval world. Recent Shakespeare criticism, particularly that of William Elton, has found fault with Tillyard's book and the kind of effect it has had on Shakespearean criticism. Elton argues that Tillyard's book fails to take sufficiently into account important influences such as Calvinism, Machiavellianism, the rise of skepticism, and the Catholic Reformation. Elton makes a number of other complaints about Tillyard's handling of the material; for example, he says that Tillyard fails to define "order" adequately and has a tendency to make unsupported generalizations.<sup>5</sup>

The ideas which Ulysses' speech exposes are important to an interpretation of this play. The Elizabethans saw the world in terms of a series of parallels or correspondences. God's relationship to the universe was seen to parallel the relationship of the king to the body politic, the father to the family, the head to the individual



body, and the reason to the warring humours or passions. Norman O.

Brown, following Freud, would add the relationship of the penis to

the sexual organization. I quote from Brown:

A king is erected, rex erectus est. A king is an erection of the body politic. A political society comes into being when it articulates itself and produces a representative: a people erupts into royalty. . . . The king personifies the pomp and pleasure of the community; but must also bear the burden of royalty, and as scapegoat, take away the sins; ejaculation gets rid of the tension. . . . The penis is the head of the body. Every organization has a head; headless bodies cannot act.<sup>6</sup>

And, Marshall McLuhan would add to these the relationship of the sense of sight to the sensorium. (My reasons for these additions to the traditional outline of Elizabethan ideas will emerge more clearly as the thesis progresses.) The function of the God, king, father, head, reason, penis, and eye is to order and control the larger body which it directs. In every case, too, the attempt is made by that part to exercise a unifying function--to create oneness out of the chaos of the undirected whole.

In the chain of being which concerned the Elizabethans, the sense of degree is established by the king at the head of the body politic. Beneath him on the ladder (or chain) were all the others in the body politic, each person occupying a particular, carefully graded position which did not change. Unless all persons respected the divinely established "degrees," the kingdom would be threatened with chaos. This is, in fact, what happens in the Greek camp in Troilus and Cressida.

In the Greek council scene, Ulysses is the only person to



speak at all perceptively about the disorder among his countrymen.

He says:

The specialty of rule hath been neglected;  
 And look, how many Grecian tents do stand  
 Hollow upon this plain, so many hollow factions.  
 When that the general is not like the hive  
 To whom the foragers shall all repair,  
 What honey is expected? Degree being vizarded,  
 Th' unworhiest shows as fairly in the mask.

(I, iii, 76-84)

This speech--part of the much longer speech on order--bears some commentary. First of all, Ulysses suggests, by the end of the speech quite directly, that the failure of the Greeks has nothing to do with Trojan strength, but with Greek weakness. And the cause of the Greek weakness is the breakdown in the chain of command. The image of the hive, which Tillyard connects with the Archbishop's speech on the commonwealth of the bees in Henry V, has important connections within the play as well. The men not only find it possible to desert the hive, they find they have lost all sense of a hive. As well as lacking productive drones, the Greek "hive" lacks a queen. The return of Helen would, in that sense, restore the "hive." The imagery in the play is better integrated than many critics think because Helen is in fact referred to as "honey." In Act Three, scene one, Pandarus, while attempting to arrange an excuse for Troilus' absence from the palace, repeatedly addresses Helen as a sweet queen and finally calls her a "honey-sweet queen." In this scene, in which Paris is seen enjoying his stolen honey, the context is such that the word "queen" can carry the additional meaning of "whore." Certainly, Helen is a debased





queen, if not yet a queen.

The breakdown in command on which Ulysses comments from his position high on the ladder of authority is seen with equal clarity by Thersites from his vantage point at the very base of the ladder. Thersites observes at one point that, "Agamemnon is a fool to offer to command Achilles, Achilles is a fool to be commanded of Agamemnon, Thersites is a fool to serve such a fool and this Patroclus is a fool positive." (II, iii, 64-67). Thersites seems to believe that the inept or impotent leader, such as Agamemnon, should not even attempt to command a strong warrior such as Achilles. Thersites' remarks then counterbalance Ulysses' schemes to restore Agamemnon's command of Achilles. Not confined in his expression, like Ulysses, to rational language, Thersites conveys his opinions in powerful imagery of revulsion:

AJAX: Thersites!

THERSITES: Agamemnon, how if he had boils--full,  
all over, generally? [like a general]

AJAX: Thersites!

THERSITES: And those boils did run?--say so--did  
not the general run then? Were not that a  
botchy core?

AJAX: Dog!

THERSITES: Then would come some matter from him.  
I see none now.

(II, i, 1-9)

Using the imagery of disease which Caroline Spurgeon finds so common in this play, Thersites scoffs at Agamemnon's impotence--his inability



to "run" anything. The "botchy core" image is particularly effective, for Agamemnon is indeed now the "botchy core" of the Greek camp in the sense that he botches everything. Agamemnon becomes symbolic of the Greek camp as a whole, which is a congestion of corruption unable to erupt and free the disease. The kind of rebellion which occurs repeatedly in the history plays as an attempt to institute a new and more efficacious monarchy does not occur in the Greek camp. Rebellion aborts itself as Achilles and Patroclus tent themselves and content themselves with theatrical mockings of their leaders.

William Empson, who discusses Troilus and Cressida in the course of his article "Double Plots," explores Shakespeare's use of subdued puns as a technique for linking the two aspects of the double plot. Empson quotes the passage above (II, i, 1-9) and then says about the word "general":

The irony of the word is that though it connects the hero to the people it implies a failure of his rule; a general commands an orderly force such as the people ought to be, but the general is a mob. The core of the state here is botchy and dissolving into the primitive matter of chaos, and the comparison to syphilis is an appeal from the plot about heroism to the plot about love.<sup>7</sup>

(Incidentally, those critics who find Pandarus' final speech so totally out of place may not have noted that it is related at least imagistically to this earlier passage.) Empson finds a second example of the use of the word "general" quite important in this same context. He quotes from the play:

The specialty of rule hath been neglected  
And look, how many Grecian tents do stand  
Hollow upon the plain, so many hollow factions.



While [sic] that the general is not like the hive  
 To whom the foragers shall all repair,  
 What honey is expected? Degree being vizarded,  
 The unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask.

And, as a comment on the passage, he writes:

The general is given the personal whom, but the state is being personified; Ulysses is speaking to a general, but it is the general good which is like a hive. Shakespeare indeed thought that the hive had a king, but not that he had rational means of control; the hive is a symbol both of absolute regal power and of a mysteriously self-regulating social order.<sup>8</sup>

This situation in which the general is like a hive is of course an ideal one, which occurs rarely, if ever. It certainly does not occur in this play, in which every man imitates the general's impotence and is weak and inactive. Ulysses describes what is happening:

The general's disdained  
 By him one step below, he by the next,  
 That next by him beneath; so every step,  
 Exemplified by the first pace that is sick  
 Of his superior, grows to an envious fever  
 Of pale and bloodless emulation;  
 And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,  
 Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,  
 Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength.  
 (I, iii, 129-137)

One of the causes of the Greek difficulties is that Agamemnon has lost (or perhaps never had) the appearance of a king. Tillyard says that the medieval king was supposed to have a distinctive and commanding appearance like "the aspray or osprey, [which] was a small eagle, king among birds, and fish were supposed to yield themselves voluntarily, turning their bellies up to him."<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare in other plays shows kings who look the part. Richard the Second is a weak and troubled figure, but one with regal bearing:





BOLINGBROKE: See, see, King Richard doth himself appear,  
 As doth the blushing discontented sun  
 From out the fiery portal of the east,  
 When he perceives the envious clouds are bent  
 To dim his glory and to stain the track  
 Of his bright passage to the occident.

YORK: Yet looks he like a king! Behold, his eye,  
 As bright as is the eagle's, lightens forth  
 Controlling majesty. Alack, alack, for woe,  
 That any harm should stain so fair a show!

(Richard II: III, iii, 62-71)

In Richard's case, simply looking the part unfortunately does not ensure that he can play it. Henry V, on the other hand, is a strong figure both in his actions and in his visual appearance. At Henry V's funeral, Gloucester eulogizes him:

England ne'er had a king until his time.  
 Virtue he had, deserving to command.  
 His brandish'd sword did blind men with his beams;  
 His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings;  
 His sparkling eyes, replete with wrathful fire,  
 More dazzled and drove back his enemies  
 Than mid-day sun fierce bent against their faces.  
 What should I say? His deeds exceed all speech.  
 He ne'er lift up his hand but conquered.

(Henry VI, Part One: I, i, 7-16)

Agamemnon in Troilus and Cressida is not of the same mettle. It is true that two of his senior advisers compliment him on his manifest greatness. Early in the council scene, Nestor says:

With due observance of thy godlike seat,  
 Great Agamemnon, Nestor shall apply  
 Thy latest words.

(I, iii, 31-33)

And Ulysses introduces his speech on order and degree with extensive tributes to both Agamemnon and Nestor:

Agamemnon,  
 Thou great commander, nerves and bone of Greece,









Agamemnon, so Agamemnon's metaphoric reference to Achilles is quite ironic. Even more ironic is his suggestion that there is "one voice" within the Greek camp which calls Agamemnon head and general. Ulysses has just described the mocking of all the Greek leaders which goes on in Achilles' tent. To return to the passage:

AENEAS: Fair leave and large security. How may  
A stranger to those most imperial looks  
Know them from eyes of other mortals?

AGAMEMNON: How?

AENEAS: Ay.  
I ask, that I might waken reverence,  
And bid the cheek be ready with a blush  
Modest as morning when she coldly eyes  
The youthful Phoebus.  
Which is that god in office, guiding men?  
Which is the high and mighty Agamemnon?

AGAMEMNON: This Trojan scorns us, or the men of Troy  
Are ceremonious courtiers.

. . . . .

AGAMEMNON: Sir, you of Troy, call you yourself Aeneas?

AENEAS: Ay, Greek, that is my name.

AGAMEMNON: What's your affair, I pray you?

AENEAS: Sir, pardon; 'tis for Agamemnon's ears.

AGAMEMNON: He hears nought privately that comes from Troy.

AENEAS: Nor I from Troy come not to whisper him.  
I bring a trumpet to awake his ear,  
To set his seat on the attentive bent,  
And then to speak.

AGAMEMNON: Speak frankly as the wind;  
It is not Agamemnon's sleeping hour.  
That thou shalt know, Trojan, he is awake,  
He tells thee so himself.

(I, iii, 223-256)



Shakespeare deliberately sets Agamemnon and Aeneas verbally fencing for some forty lines before Agamemnon finally identifies himself as the man whom Aeneas believes he should be able to recognize solely by his kingly bearing. Agamemnon neither looks like a king, nor knows how to deal with the situation.

Not only does Agamemnon's manner fail to radiate authority and therefore to command respect from friend or foe, but in one scene at least Shakespeare has the other characters ignore him much as the Trojans do Priam. (Kimbrough says of Priam: "When the king is the observer and not the observed there arises the dangerous implication that the 'specialty of rule' is being neglected within the walls of Troy just as it is in the Greek camp."<sup>10</sup>) After the abortive joust between Ajax and Hector, Agamemnon and his cohorts come forward to greet the Trojan champion. As his countrymen move forward, Ajax says: "Great Agamemnon comes to meet us here." (IV, v, 158). But as Hector's reply indicates, he for one is not interested in meeting Agamemnon:

The worthiest of them tell me name by name;  
But for Achilles, my own searching eyes  
Shall find him by his large and portly size.  
(IV, v, 159-161)

Sixty-three lines of polite courtly speech elapse before Hector and Achilles come face to face. During the interval Hector is introduced to Agamemnon, Nestor, and Ulysses; but his courtliness does not conceal his boredom. Hector, as a warrior, is no more interested in these aging schemers than is Achilles. The conversation of the two warriors, though aggressive and brief, is the center of interest for this scene. The





scene comes to a close with Hector's and Achilles' agreement to meet in the battle the next day--an agreement which usurps any significance which might be attached to Agamemnon's offer of hospitality.

Agamemnon's problem is partly the impotence of a disarmed king who tries to assert power or mastery over a strongly armed warrior.

Machiavelli comments on the folly of such a course of action:

For, among the other bad results that being disarmed brings about, it makes you despicable: one of those infamies a prince should guard against. . .for there is no comparison whatsoever between an armed and an unarmed man, and it is not reasonable to expect one who is armed to obey willingly one who is unarmed, and that an unarmed person will be safe in the midst of his armed servants; for with the latter being scornful, and the former suspicious, it is impossible for them to work well together. And so a prince who has no comprehension of military affairs. . .cannot be respected by his soldiers nor can he trust them.<sup>11</sup>

In Machiavellian terms, the justification of authority is that it functions as a source of strength to protect the subject and, therefore, is viewed by the subject as useful. But, as indicated above, the commander who is not a better warrior than the warriors under his command is in difficulty unless he can assert his superiority in some other way. The tendency of civilized kingship is to abandon the notion of the leader as the strongest warrior in favor of the notion of the leader as a reasonable and capable administrator. The reverse process occurs in Troilus and Cressida: the Trojan city represents the civilized society in decay; the Greek camp represents a return to barbarism. Thus it can be said that the play is about chaos, the decivilization which occurs when authority breaks down:

How could communities,  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,



Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
 The primogenity and due of birth,  
 Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,  
 But by degree, stand in authentic place?  
 Take but degree away, untune that string,  
 And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets  
 In mere oppugnancy.

(I, iii, 103-111)

As a consequence of Agamemnon's weakness, Achilles--the strongest warrior--usurps his prestige. Achilles' criticism is really invited by Agamemnon. For example, in his speech which opens the Greek council scene, Agamemnon reveals his inadequacies: though he employs magnificent rhetoric, he ends up uttering "sound and fury, signifying nothing." Initially in the speech, he deflects the real issue which is the men's complaints against his leadership:

Why then, you princes,  
 Do you with cheeks abashed behold our works  
 And call them shames. . . .

(I, iii, 17-19)

Instead of accepting their complaints and offering some realistic plan to rectify the situation, he offers more rhetoric:

[The Greek failures] are indeed nought else  
 But the protractive trials of great Jove  
 To find persistive constancy in men. . . .

(I, iii, 19-21)

What Agamemnon asks in effect is that his men be able to assemble into a body politic in such strength as to compensate for the lack of a strong head. Nestor's suggestion that "In the reproof of chance/ Lies the true proof of men" (I, iii, 33-34) is unintentionally ironic, as Agamemnon has by now proved not to be a man in either civilized or barbaric terms and Achilles, for most of the play at least, appears to be a man in mil-



itary terms. The speeches of both Agamemnon and Nestor remain sham recognitions of the necessary qualities of strength and submission required of the leader. Patience with or devotion to a cause remain debased virtues in a situation in which both the end and the means sought to achieve it are unworthy.

Achilles' defiance of Agamemnon is in these circumstances the natural replacement of weakness with strength. Achilles refuses to see Agamemnon and refuses to entertain any of Agamemnon's requests. Instead, as Ulysses indicates in his speech, he mocks them all:

The great Achilles, whom opinion crowns  
The sinew and the forehand of our host,  
Having his ear full of his airy fame,  
Grows dainty of his worth, and in his tent  
Lies mocking our designs.

. . . . .

Sometimes, great Agamemnon,  
Thy topless deputation he puts on,  
And, like a strutting player, whose conceit  
Lies in his hamstring, and doth think it rich  
To hear the wooden dialogue and sound,  
'Twixt his stretched footing and the scaffoldage,  
Such to-be-pitied and o'erwrested seeming  
He acts thy greatness in.

(I, iii, 142-146 and 151-158)

In a military environment, the members of the body politic see the most powerful man in combat as their head. What should be the "hand" employed by reason becomes instead a substitute for reasoned authority. Achilles, the "forehand of our host," who remains tented, is like a penis remaining within its foreskin and mocking any attempt of the body to act (the genital organization corresponding to the body politic). As leader of the disaffection, Achilles abuses Agamemnon's messengers. Moreover, since Achilles' tent has become in effect the new center of





the camp, Agamemnon finds it necessary to go to his [Achilles'] tent. Agamemnon's feeble attempts to get Achilles to indicate respect for him fail miserably. Agamemnon tells Patroclus:

Let him [Achilles] be told so, lest perchance he think  
We dare not move the question of our place  
Or know not what we are.

(II, iii, 83-85)

While Agamemnon's words suggest that he has a sense of his own worth and the respect due him, his action in coming to the tent has betrayed his weakness. When Patroclus returns with Achilles' refusal, Agamemnon insists that a lengthy rebuff be delivered to Achilles:

Hear you, Patroclus.  
We are too well acquainted with these answers;  
But his evasion, winged thus swift with scorn,  
Cannot outfly our apprehensions.  
Much attribute he hath, and much the reason  
Why we ascribe it to him; yet all his virtues,  
Not virtuously on his own part beheld,  
Do in our eyes begin to lose their gloss--  
. . . . .  
Go and tell him  
We come to speak with him; and you shall not sin  
If you do say we think him overproud  
And underhonest, in self-assumption greater  
Than in the note of judgment, and worthier than himself.

(II, iii, 115-127)

But instead of departing, he now grovels before his chief warrior by sending in Ulysses, who is equally unsuccessful in persuading Achilles to relent. In spite of Agamemnon's earlier threats:

Go tell him this; and add  
That, if he overhold his price so much,  
We'll none of him; but let him, like an engine  
Not portable, lie under this report:  
"Bring action hither, this cannot go to war."  
A stirring dwarf we do allowance give  
Before a sleeping giant. Tell him so.

(II, iii, 134-140)





he ends by suggesting in desperation that Ajax too should appeal to Achilles:

Let Ajax go to him.  
 Dear lord, go you and greet him in his tent;  
 'Tis said he holds you well, and will be led  
 At your request a little from himself.  
 (II, iii, 180-184)

At this point, Ulysses steps in and insists that this tactic would be absolute folly, in that Ajax's steps to Achilles will be consecrated by the action. The fact that Agamemnon seems genuinely unable to understand why there is so much trouble with Achilles combined with the fact that it is necessary for Ulysses to give this advice underscores Agamemnon's political impotence. This kind of desperate leaning on one advisor would be seen by Machiavelli as an almost indefensible position for a leader to be in.

Ulysses plays a compensatory role in the drama: he attempts to supply a substitute leadership for the Greeks. However, his solution to the problem of the disruption of degree is a false one. Obviously the true solution would be restoration of the head or reason. What Ulysses attempts is to turn one hand against the other: to turn Ajax against Achilles. Ulysses is a sort of debased Prospero. In seeking to transform events into power struggles destructive to both parties, he engages in Machiavellian manipulation: handling. Shakespeare's Ulysses is as tricky as Dante's, who deliberately deceives his own men. Though Shakespeare's Ulysses does succeed in negating the power of the hand--at one point neither Achilles nor Ajax will arm--the Greeks are



at that point desperate for the warriors' assistance. As Thersites says, "the policy of those crafty swearing rascals---that stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same dog-fox, Ulysses--is proved not worth a blackberry. . .the Grecians begin to proclaim barbarism, and policy grows into an ill opinion" (V, iv, 9-18). The situation has grown totally "out of hand" and becomes a parody of itself. Even the substitute leader is impotent.

Hiram Haydn argues that Machiavelli constantly compares political action to the action of doctors attempting to renew the health of the body:

Two passages from the Discourses should serve to illustrate this concept of the state as a biological entity or organism, and Machiavelli's use of biological analogy and medical terminology even when dealing with the whole human race, which he considers "a compound body." . . . Machiavelli takes the humanly artifactual social and political institution and "reduces" it to an organic agency of uninformed nature. His naturalism, which we have long been considering, is never more blatant than here. It is a crude, naive naturalism, perhaps, and--when qualified--as unwarranted as the reverse process of the medievalists . . . He looks at everything as a part of nature, of natural growth, and virtue is health, the process of efficient functioning in accordance with the particular object's norm of health.<sup>12</sup>

Ulysses' manipulation is a failing Machiavellianism on three counts. First of all, he suggests spreading the disease in order to cure it. Secondly, he proposes to treat the symptoms (the rebellious warriors) rather than the disease (impotent leadership). Thirdly, his scheme fails through a blow of fortune (something that Machiavelli says a leader must always be prepared for and able to cope with) which takes the form of Hector's challenge. This complicating factor reveals



Ulysses' cure to be a laboratory solution effective only under completely controlled circumstances.

Ulysses' techniques represent an illicit use of the power available to the state. Ulysses suggests to Achilles, in terms which relate to my thesis, that he [Ulysses] is linked with a mysterious and mystical source of power within the state:

ULYSSES:                                But 'gainst your privacy  
    The reasons are more potent and heroical.  
    'Tis known, Achilles, that you are in love  
    With one of Priam's daughters.

ACHILLES:    Ha!    Known!

ULYSSES:    Is that a wonder?  
    The providence that's in a watchful state  
    Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold  
    Finds bottom in th' uncomprehensive deeps,  
    Keeps place with thought, and almost, like the gods,  
    Do thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.  
    There is a mystery--with whom relation  
    Durst never meddle--in the soul of state,  
    Which hath an operation more divine  
    Than breath or pen can give expressure to.  
    All the commerce that you have had with Troy  
    As perfectly is ours as yours, my lord;  
    And better would it fit Achilles much  
    To throw down Hector than Polyxena.  
    (III, iii, 190-208)

Actually, this power is secretive without being mystical; it is a perversion of the sacredness of power. The power tactics in the play convert the chief warriors' energies into self-centered and ultimately self-destructive aggression. In much the same way the war has become not an expression of the cumulative energies of the Greek camp, but mis-directed destruction which will at last "eat up himself."





In his book, Metatheatre, Lionel Abel discusses "why tragedy is so difficult, if not altogether impossible, for the modern dramatist, and. . .the nature of a comparably philosophic form of drama"<sup>13</sup> which he calls "metatheatre." In metatheatre, "the world is a stage and life is a dream."<sup>14</sup> For metatheatre, any order which exists is something which is continually improvised by men.<sup>15</sup> In this light, Ulysses' role is constantly to improvise order in spite of the discordant activities of the warriors. Abel says of Hamlet:

There is hardly a scene in the whole work in which some character is not trying to dramatize another. Almost every important character acts at some moment like a playwright, employing a playwright's consciousness of drama to impose a certain posture or attitude on another.<sup>16</sup>

He later adds that there are four playwrights in Hamlet: Claudius (a writer of melodrama), the Ghost (also a writer of melodrama), Polonius (an amateur playwright), and Hamlet (a reviser seeking something between melodrama and tragedy).<sup>17</sup> In Troilus and Cressida, possibly written just after Hamlet, Ulysses is really a director with a bad cast. He tries repeatedly to make his king look and act like a king and his chief warrior look and act like a powerful man without overstepping his bounds. But Ulysses has to contend with a rival director--Achilles--who directs Patroclus in their hammy mockings of the council scenes. Ulysses talks of their mocking using histrionic terms:

With him Patroclus  
Upon a lazy bed the livelong day



Breaks scurril jests,  
 And with ridiculous and silly action  
 (Which, slanderer, he imitation calls)  
 He pageants us. Sometime, great Agamemnon,  
 Thy topless deputation he puts on,  
 And, like a strutting player, whose conceit  
 Lies in his hamstring, and doth think it rich  
 To hear the wooden dialogue and sound  
 'Twixt his stretched footing and the scaffoldage,  
 Such to-be-pitied and o'erwrested seeming  
 He acts thy greatness in; and when he speaks,  
 'Tis like a chime a-mending, with terms unsquared,  
 Which, from the tongue of roaring Typhon dropped,  
 Would seem hyperboles. At this fusty stuff  
 The large Achilles, on his pressed bed lolling,  
 From his deep chest laughs out a loud applause,  
 Cries, "Excellent! 'tis Agamemnon right.  
 Now play me Nestor. . . ."  
 (I, iii, 146-165)

As Ulysses' schemes develop, Achilles and Ajax vie with each other to fill the power vacuum. Achilles, having turned against Agamemnon and having disarmed to defy him, cannot re-arm to renew his prestige through combat with Hector without having Agamemnon and his advisers claim that they have persuaded him to do so. Ajax at the beginning of the play is going regularly to the field in an effort to replace Achilles as chief warrior. Later, however, Ajax too disarms, because after his joust with Hector he has swelled in pride. He feels he must play the part of the pre-eminent warrior by imitating Achilles' defiance of Agamemnon. Consequently, Ajax and Achilles become curious usurpers of power who seek to fill the vacuum, yet are forced to avoid conflict. The tendency toward insurrection, so much a problem in the Greek camp, is echoed by the tendency of each man to be divided against



himself. Of Achilles, Ulysses says:

Imagined worth  
Holds in his blood such swoln and hot discourse  
That 'twixt his mental and his active parts  
Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages  
And batters down himself. What should I say?  
He is so plaguy proud that the death-tokens of it  
Cry "No recovery."

(II, iii, 174-179)

A similarly self-destructive division within Ajax is described by Thersites:

"The man's undone forever, for if Hector break not his neck i' the combat, he'll break't himself in vainglory. He knows not me. I said, "Good morrow, Ajax"; and he replies, "Thanks, Agamemnon." What think you of this man that takes me for the general? He's grown a very land-fish, languageless, a monster." (III, iii, 258-264). The loss of identity that Ajax suffers is brought about by Agamemnon's impotence as leader and by the misdirected scheming of Ulysses. Significantly, Ajax mistakes Thersites for Agamemnon: the chaos is such that the top and the bottom of the ladder of degree have become one.



### III

#### THE HAND TRIUMPHANT OVER THE HEAD: THE MENTALITY OF THE WARRIOR

The image of the potent male in the double-camp environment of Troilus and Cressida is that of the military hero: the warrior. The warrior is the man who substitutes sword for phallus and defense of his aggressive passions for control over them. The field of battle becomes for him a substitute for the field of life, and he persistently reduces all aspects of life to a military common denominator: an appropriate challenge with which he can cope. The two most potent warriors in Troilus and Cressida (Hector and Achilles) are the two men most capable of inducing fear and commanding respect through that fear. By inducing fear in others, they render the other men "womanish": in this adolescent mental environment fear is considered a female attribute.

James Joyce thinks of clothing as weaponry. Shakespeare in Troilus and Cressida shows military heroes who are not much more than armor. I hope to show how their world view is symbolized by their armor. Because Shakespeare wants to attract the audience's attention to the matter of armor and to the whole business of the military hero and his supposed potency, he begins his play with the entry of an armed prologue. The first twenty-two lines which the prologue speaks give information which would, without question, be common knowledge to any





Elizabethan theater-goer of the period from 1598 to 1602. Thus, the following lines (Prologue: 22-25) take on considerable significance simply because they have been preceded by the commonplace:

And hither am I come,  
A prologue armed, but not in confidence  
Of author's pen or actor's voice, but suited  
In like conditions as our argument.  
(Prologue: 22-25)

Most editors point out that this speech may indicate that Troilus and Cressida is Shakespeare's contribution to the war of the theaters.

Walter Raleigh, for example, suggests that the "prologue armed" is:

Apparently a hit at the "armed prologue" which introduced Jonson's polemical Poetaster, 1602. Jonson's "prologue" explained that he bore arms to protect himself against "base detractors and illiterate apes," i.e. the fellow dramatists and actors with whom he was at fierce feud at the time. Here the "prologue," by way of peaceful contrast, justifies his being armed from no vainglory on the part of the author or actor but because he has to introduce warlike topics.<sup>1</sup>

I do not wish to dispute Raleigh's suggestion, which is supported by other commentators, but I submit that he may be oversimplifying.

Shakespeare may well be suggesting that his own "armed prologue," like Jonson's, may be in need of protection from the audience, but that in this case the audience's hostility will be caused not merely by the chauvinism of the author or actor, but by the "argument" of the play itself. In any case, when the prologue is presented by a man in armor, and when the opening lines of the play then show us the hero disarming, the playwright is drawing our attention to the armor itself and to the meaning of that armor. Furthermore, the play contains numerous references to arming and disarming as well as to particular



parts of the warrior's accouterments and weapons.<sup>2</sup>

As I have already said, Troilus, in his initial act of disarming, indicates that he believes the war outside the walls of Troy to be more manly than the battle of the sexes which is sapping his strength. For the warrior, love becomes a kind of truancy from more appropriate arms. This kind of truancy invades both camps: Paris fails to participate in battle because his Nell will not have it so; Achilles refuses to fight because of his love for Polyxena. But, as Aeneas suggests when he presents Hector's challenge to the Greeks, love should be a spur to valiant deeds, not a substitute for them:

Kings, princes, lords,  
If there be one among the fair'st of Greece  
That holds his honor higher than his ease,  
That seeks his praise more than he fears his peril,  
That knows his valor and knows not his fear,  
That loves his mistress more than in confession  
With truant vows to her own lips he loves,  
And dare avow her beauty and her worth  
In other arms than hers--to him this challenge.  
(I, iii, 264-272)

The pun on "arms" juxtaposes the armor and weapons of the warrior with the arms of the lover enfolding the beloved. Aeneas asserts that words of love (or, for that matter, a man's words in general) have a hollow ring unless supported by publicly recognized valor in battle. In concluding the same speech, Aeneas uses another military image which has a sexual implication:

And [Hector] will tomorrow with his trumpet call,  
Midway between your tents and walls of Troy,  
To rouse a Grecian that is true in love.  
If any come, Hector shall honor him;  
If none, he'll say in Troy when he retires,



The Grecian dames are sunburnt and not worth  
The splinter of a lance.

(I, iii, 277-283)

Failure of a suitable opponent to appear will render the Greek women worthless and, by implication, castrate the Greek warriors.

For all the characters in this play, participation in battle becomes the yardstick by which to measure virility. Failure constantly to reassert and thereby renew one's virility through battle will diminish the stature even of Hector. Aeneas says:

We have, great Agamemnon, here in Troy  
A prince called Hector--Priam is his father--  
Who in this dull and long-continued truce  
Is rusty grown.

(I, iii, 260-264)

In this speech, Hector, the greatest of the warriors, is himself reduced to the status of a piece of armor grown rusty through infrequent usage. Notice that idealization of the military hero leads to an equation of the individual man with his armor. Now the military man's armor is his security, masculinity, and identity. But the armor seeks to conceal the vulnerability of the man contained within it and thus is a shell, a substitute for a true identity.

Armor is also associated in the play with honor. We remember that for Hotspur in Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part One, armor functions as a magnet drawing honor towards it: in other words, armor for him is honor. The reverse is true also, for honor is a sort of character-armor, as Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida implies in a speech to Achilles:

Perseverance, dear my lord,





Keeps honor bright. To have done, is to hang  
 Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail  
 In monumental mock'ry.

(III, iii, 150-153)

Here Ulysses speaks in imagery which identifies the abstraction "honor" with the concrete apparel "armor." Both honor and armor, the one psychologically and the other physically, protect the warrior from being penetrated. But in so doing, they protect him from life and deaden him. Perhaps this truth is one of the meanings present in Hector's statement near the end of the play, when he looks at the man he has just killed and says:

Most putrefied core, so fair without,  
 Thy goodly armor thus hath cost thy life.

(V, viii, 1-2)

The warrior, the man who wears armor and who values honor, is superficially glamorous but inwardly dead: his armor has cost him his life.<sup>3</sup>

Violent actions in Troilus and Cressida are generally motivated by revenge which is seen as a means of regaining lost honor. Honor is the primary motivating force for the military hero. He uses the term in an effort to attach respectability to his defense of passionate and brutal action. Matthew Proser says that this is true of Coriolanus:

Involved in soldiering, in fighting, in killing, from his youth, Coriolanus persistently associates "honor" with the amount of havoc he can cause among the ranks of his "enemies." The nobility of Volumnia's sacrifice is undermined by the "hardness" in it, a "hardness" mirrored in Coriolanus' typical solution for the problems he comes to face: destruction, be it verbal or real, for his adversaries.

Honor for Coriolanus, then, lies not so much in defending his country, but in the simple fact of being a warrior.<sup>4</sup>

Thought and feeling are alien to such a man, as Northrop Frye argues:



The heroic society, most fully presented in the tragedy of order, is a society of action, and its two deadly rivals are feeling and thought. People who think too much, like Cassius, are dangerous to it: the isolating quality of thought and consciousness will be our next subject. But a continuous suspension of feeling is as necessary to the heroic life as a suspension of thought.<sup>5</sup>

The expression of the disengaged will rather than of the whole nature under the guidance of thought is the essence of the military mentality. But the will is a blunt, hard instrument, like a sword: the military man is an extension of his sword.

The question of passion (or will) versus reason as a basis for military action is the issue at stake in the Trojan debate which is ostensibly about ending the war by returning Helen to the Greeks. Hector is a more complex character than Troilus or the typical military mind in that he [Hector] at least with one part of his mind wants reasons to support his actions: "What merit's in that reason which denies/ The yielding of her up?" (II, ii, 24-25). But Troilus needs no "reasons" for keeping Helen--all he is interested in is an excuse for keeping the war going:

Fie, fie, my brother!  
Weigh you the worth and honor of a king  
So great as our dread father in a scale  
Of common ounces? Will you with counters sum  
The past proportion of his infinite,  
And buckle in a waist most fathomless  
With spans and inches so diminutive  
As fears and reasons?

(II, ii, 25-32)

Hector has argued the humane point of view:

Since the first sword was drawn about this question,  
Every tithe soul, 'mongst many thousand dismes,  
Hath been as dear as Helen, I mean, of ours.



To guard a thing not ours nor worth to us,  
 Had it our name, the value of one ten,  
 What merit's in that reason which denies  
 The yielding of her up?

(II, ii, 18-25)

But Troilus cannot understand how the lost lives of ordinary soldiers constitute any kind of reason for abandoning the battle. He has the sense of life as an heroic game that Frye discusses in the following passage:

Battles are very serious matters to ordinary people, the non-heroic who are not allowed to wear heavy armour. One thinks of Falstaff's remark: "There's not three of my hundred and fifty left alive; and they are for the town's end, to beg during life." But to heroes battles are a game. It is not that they are never hurt or killed, but that battles for them are primarily a risking of or gambling with life, a game played with death as the stakes. Man is homo ludens, a player of games, and he is never more deeply engaged in play than when he is trying to kill someone at the risk of being killed himself.

The coward is despised because he refuses to play the game, and so reminds us that it is a game, and that we have a choice of not playing it. In the "ecstatic" heroic society one's life is in one's loyalties: to die bravely in battle is still, in a very real sense, to preserve one's essential life. The coward feels that the centre of life is not in his leader or society but in himself. He is feared as well as despised, because unless his behaviour is shouted down with contempt and ridicule there will be a slight suggestion about it of sanity in the midst of hysteria. This suggestion is tolerable only when released as humour, as it is in Falstaff's speeches on honour and counterfeits. Falstaff in these speeches is not so much a clown as the spokesman of the ironic vision that outlives the tragic one.<sup>6</sup>

Helenus does not have Troilus' "heroic" attitudes. He (who by advocating peace becomes cowardly in Troilus' eyes) supports Hector and challenges Troilus:

No marvel, though you bite so sharp at reasons,  
 You are so empty of them. Should not our father  
 Bear the great sway of his affairs with reason,  
 Because your speech hath none that tell him so?

(II, ii, 33-36)





Troilus views life in terms of heroes and cowards. Hector and Paris as warriors rank with the heroes, but Helenus and Cassandra as priest and prophetess rank with the cowards. The latter two find reasons and speak out against the war. Helenus dutifully supports his father in battle, but shows little enthusiasm; Pandarus says that Helenus fights "indifferent well." The roles of priest and weak warrior suggest impotence to the vigorous young Troilus. In argument Troilus chooses his adversary carefully: rather than attack his strong brother Hector, he attacks Helenus who has supported Hector's position:

You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest;  
 You fur your gloves with reason. Here are your reasons:  
 You know an enemy intends you harm;  
 You know a sword employed is perilous,  
 And reason flies the object of all harm.  
 Who marvels then, when Helenus beholds  
 A Grecian and his sword, if he do set  
 The very wings of reason to his heels  
 And fly like chidden Mercury from Jove,  
 Or like a star disorbed? Nay, if we talk of reason,  
 Let's shut our gates and sleep! Manhood and honor  
 Should have hare-hearts, would they but fat their thoughts  
 With this crammed reason. Reason and respect  
 Makes livers pale and lustihood deject.  
 (II, ii, 37-50)

Troilus is not satisfied with rejecting the war protesters. He rejects Hector's chivalric code as well, seeing it as a crack in what would otherwise be truly potent armor. Chivalry, we might say, is really an attempt to mask the brutality of battle under an armor of good manners: the armor masks the murderer. Troilus, a cruder soul than Hector, does not require this mask:

TROILUS: Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you,  
 Which better fits a lion than a man.





HECTOR: What vice is that? Good Troilus, chide me for it.

TROILUS: When many times the captive Grecian falls,  
Even in the fan and wind of your fair sword,  
You bid them rise and live.

HECTOR: O, 'tis fair play.

TROILUS: Fool's play, by heaven, Hector.

HECTOR: How now? How now?

TROILUS: For the love of all the gods,  
Let's leave the hermit pity with our mother,  
And when we have our armors buckled on,  
The venom'd vengeance ride upon our swords,  
Spur them to ruthless work, rein them from ruth.

HECTOR: Fie, save, fie!

TROILUS: Hector, then 'tis wars.  
(V, iii, 37-49)

The events of the play, particularly Hector's murder at the hands of Achilles whom Hector had gallantly spared, prove that Troilus is correct, if inhuman in believing that pity is out of place in war.

The most important critical issue about Hector arises through what critics call his "startling" about-face in which he abandons his nobility and yields to Troilus' argument to retain Helen. Hector yields to Troilus and Paris, whose arguments he has suggested are motivated by revenge and pleasure, because he has been told by Troilus that they will gain fame and glory out of the defense of Helen:

TROILUS: She is a theme of honor and renown,  
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,  
Whose present courage may beat down our foes  
And fame in time to come canonize us;  
For I presume brave Hector would not lose  
So rich advantage of a promised glory  
As smiles upon the forehead of this action



For the wide world's revenue.

(II, ii, 199-206)

In suggesting that his brother would sacrifice the "wide world's revenue" for glory, Troilus is not misjudging Hector. What has really bothered Hector all through this scene is not so much how right the Trojans are in keeping Helen but how much honor the Trojans are really getting out of the war. If the price of the war is too great in terms of the number of men killed, then the honor for the leaders may be diminished. In response to Cassandra's comment that Troy will be destroyed, Hector says:

Now, youthful Troilus, do not these high strains  
Of divination in our sister work  
Some touches of remorse? Or is your blood  
So madly hot that no discourse of reason,  
Nor fear of bad success in a bad cause,  
Can qualify the same?

(II, ii, 113-118)

But here he seems more to be testing the strength of Troilus' convictions than taking seriously the words of his sister. Hector believes that the Trojans can win the war: he is weighing in his mind whether they will gain more honor by discarding a bad cause or by being successful in it. He is quite aware that to keep Helen in a lustful bed is wrong:

HECTOR:

Thus to persist  
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,  
But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion  
Is this in way of truth.

(II, ii, 186-189)

But he is very conscious that for the Trojans to admit publicly that they have staked their prestige erroneously would entail a great loss



in prestige or honor:

Yet ne'ertheless,  
My spritely brethren, I propend to you  
In resolution to keep Helen still;  
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence  
Upon our joint and several dignities.  
(II, ii, 189-193)

In other words, if they will lose more honor by giving her up than by keeping her, Hector's opinion "in way of truth" has no significance to him. Such respect for military glory (equated with honor) above reason is adolescent. Because it is no problem psychologically for him to sacrifice truth for glory, Hector has no tragic dimensions to his soul.

Troilus and Cressida is a play in which there are three supposed male voices of reason: Hector's, Thersites', and Ulysses'. We have seen how Hector's "reason" is destroyed by his desire for glory. Thersites' comments about wars and lechery and the fate of those who war for a placket have a cynical truth about them. However, his refusal to do anything but rail lends a certain vituperative quality to his role in the play. Vituperation as a substitute for action is impotence of a kind. But mere survival can count for something in this environment. The refusal to serve false masters constitutes a meaningful protest against the situation. Ulysses' machinations in the name of reason have in Chapter Two been demonstrated to be little more than a soldier's false cure.

The other characters make no pretense to being guided by reason. G. Wilson Knight says of Achilles' refusal to go into battle: "Achilles





sulking in his tent is conceived as a man of bodily strength, supreme egotism, and lack of intellect."<sup>7</sup> Knight sees the basic opposition in the play as one of intuition versus intelligence. In some cases, at least, it is one of simple passion versus reason. Achilles finds that his passion for Polyxena usurps what is usually his dominant passion for military action, so he stays out of battle. Then he is driven to re-arm in order to avenge the death of Patroclus, to whom he has been attached in what many critics regard as a debased homosexual passion. This passion leads him to murder Hector--an act totally without glory, but one which reveals war in its truest colors.

For the warrior, any passion for women must ultimately take second place to his devotion for battle. For example, in a minor incident early in the play, Hector's failure in battle causes a subtle but significant disruption in his relationship with his wife. He is described by Alexander as having "chid" Andromache because he was angered by Ajax's brief triumph over him in the battle of the previous day. Hector conceives of himself as a far more potent warrior than Ajax. His pride has been wounded and his manhood called into question in the conflict on the field. Because the "field" always comes first in the mind of the warrior, it dominates his handling of his personal life. Late in the play we see another example of Hector's priorities when he insists on going into battle over his wife's objections. Other warriors are far less considerate towards women than Hector. Diomedes, who represents the military mind at its least complicated level, sees



Cressida simply as an object to be sexually conquered as a means to add spice to the battle. Troilus ultimately finds war more important than love. It is noteworthy that he accepts without objection the decision that Cressida must go to the Greeks because it is part of the war activities. Though Troilus defended in council the retention of his brother's mistress (because the continuance of the war depends on holding her), he does not defend his own mistress. Later in the play Troilus does his best fighting after the object of his erotic passion--Cressida--betrays him to his enemy. Deliberately converting his love for Cressida into hatred for the Greeks, Troilus singlemindedly sets about the warrior's task and finds himself triumphant. But he must face the loss of Cressida, of Hector, and of the war. Though Troilus' participation in battle is for him a "redeeming of himself," he cannot restore Cressida's virtue, his stature as an unbetrayed lover (his manliness), Hector's life, or the life of Troy:

Go in to Troy, and say there Hector's dead,  
 There is a word will Priam turn to stone,  
 Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives,  
 Cold statues of the youth, and in a word  
 Scare Troy out of itself.

(V, x, 17-21)

The fact that sexual potency is related to military potency is made clear during the scene in which the Trojan soldiers returning from battle parade before Cressida and Pandarus. Pandarus' primary purpose during the conversation is to scuttle Cressida's rather weak defenses against Troilus' passions. As in the betrayal scene, near the end of the play, the characters in dumb show are commented on by others.



Pandarus implies that the man who fights well is everything else: honorable, noble, and a worthy lover. Pandarus builds up Hector's prowess and then seeks to set Troilus above him as even more promising:

Mark him, note him. O brave Troilus!  
 Look well upon him, niece. Look you how  
 his sword is bloodied, and his helm more  
 hacked than Hector's--and how he looks,  
 and how he goes. O admirable youth! He  
 never saw three-and-twenty. Go thy way,  
 Troilus, go thy way! Had I a sister were  
 a grace, or a daughter a goddess, he should  
 take his choice. O admirable man! Paris?  
 Paris is dirt to him; and I warrant Helen,  
 to change, would give an eye to boot.

(I, ii, 239-247)

Later in this chapter, I will attempt to show why "how he looks" is so important in this environment, but for the time being, it is sufficient to say that manhood can be detected by simple observance. Pandarus continues after Cressida has wittily challenged his comments:

"Well, well"? Why, have you any discretion,  
have you any eyes, do you know what a man is?  
 [*Italics mine*] Is not birth, beauty, good shape,  
 discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue,  
 youth, liberality, and such like, the spice and  
 salt that season a man?

(I, ii, 261-266)

The military man is an image or shell without substance; the shell masks his weaknesses. He has no character resources for "walking naked" so that when he disarms and becomes vulnerable, he is likely to be destroyed. Troilus disarms in the house of Pandarus to realize his passion for Cressida. When that passion has been betrayed, he resumes combat with the desperate fury of a man whose values have been shattered. When Hector disarms near the end of the play he becomes vulnerable too,





though in a different way from Troilus. Both Hector's and Troilus' vulnerability are caused by adherence, in their different ways, to the chivalric code. Troilus has been concerned with winning a lady whose champion he can be. Hector is concerned with fighting in a chivalrous or courteous manner. For example, when Achilles tires in battle, Hector calls for a pause which, though it insults Achilles because it suggests Hector is the superior warrior, is used by him:

HECTOR: Pause, if thou wilt.

ACHILLES: I do disdain thy courtesy, proud Trojan;  
 Be happy that my arms are out of use.  
 My rest and negligence befriends thee now,  
 But thou anon shalt hear of me again;  
 Till when, go seek thy fortune.  
 (V, vi, 14-19)

In the interval before he meets Achilles again, Hector hunts a Greek soldier "for his hide": for his costly armor which Hector covets. Having taken the armor, which becomes symbolic of the destructive force of the chivalric code, Hector disarms to rest. It is then his earlier kindness to Achilles and his own expectation of courteous treatment in return destroys him:

ACHILLES: Look, Hector, how the sun begins to set,  
 How ugly night comes breathing at his heels.  
 Even with the vail and dark'ning of the sun,  
 To close the day up, Hector's life is done.

HECTOR: I am unarmed; forgo this vantage, Greek.

ACHILLES: Strike, fellows, strike. This is the man I seek.  
 (V, viii, 5-10)

Shakespeare's audience identified closely enough with chivalric conduct to feel the brutality of Achilles' violation of the code. In





medieval literature the ideals of chivalry (which influence Hector) and of courtly love (which influence Troilus) are found together. For example, Chaucer's "General Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales begins with two figures--the knight and the squire--who respectively embody these two codes of behavior. The fact that courtly love is an outgrowth of the chivalric code of behavior is suggested by the father-son relationship of the knight and the squire. Although the concepts are anachronistic in the Trojan world, they are introduced there by Shakespeare in order that they might be drained of their glamour.

Ideally, the knight's role is to unite the cross and the sword. In other words, he attempts to make holy the aggressive actions of his sword through a purity of motive. Chaucer, for example, stresses the nobility of his knight by mentioning his participation in "holy" wars (the term itself reveals the attempt to make holy what is otherwise brutal) and mentioning his actions to aid the oppressed or weak against the tyrannical. Chaucer suggests that the ideals of the knight are those of courtesy, honor, and truth. Hector's ideals are at least in theory the same as those of Chaucer's knight, though we have already examined a conflict which develops between honor and truth. It is Hector's idealism, though, which prevents within Troy the collapse of order and the resulting barbarism which occurs in the Greek camp. For in spite of its heavy corruption, the Trojan city is more refined than the Greek camp. Hector's adherence to the chivalric code props up Priam's crippled authority and maintains a sense of decorum. The atmos-



phere of the city is one of loyalty. The medieval hierarchy or chain of being is still in operation. The family exists as a force. Really, Troy can be said to represent the seeds of evil, whereas the Greeks represent a full growth of those seeds. In the Greek camp, crudity and barbarism replace chivalry. Diomedes is barbaric and ugly in his conversations and actions. Ajax is strong, but simple-minded. Achilles' homosexual leanings and his brutal slaughter of Hector condemn him. The atmosphere in the Greek camp is one of self-interest. The atmosphere is Renaissance in that institutions such as monarchy and marriage are broken down.

In the courtly love tradition, as C. S. Lewis indicates, the eye plays a central role:

The definition of love, for Andreas [Capellanus or André the chaplain, author of De Arte Honeste Amandi], is actual fruition, and its source is visible beauty; so much so, that the blind are declared incapable of love, or, at least, of entering upon love after they have become blind.<sup>8</sup>

In the world of courtly love, the external beauty of the woman is an index of her internal beauty or worth. Visible beauty inspires the affection and loyalty of the chivalric hero and becomes the spur to valiant action. Valiant action which procures military glory is the male equivalent of feminine physical beauty. The required beauty and valor then confer eligibility to enter the world of courtly love; and beauty and valor are revealed to and bestowed by the eyes of observers. The fact "that the blind are declared incapable of love" reveals that for this medieval code blindness is a symbolic castration.



It removes the male from participation in the activities (fighting and paying courtly service) of the courtly world. With this in mind, we may examine the significance of "speculation" (which, for Shakespeare, denotes visual perception) in Troilus and Cressida.

Evidence of the importance of the "eye" can be drawn from the writings of Leonardo da Vinci who is quoted by Jan Kott:

Do you not see then that the eye encompasses the beauty of the whole world? It is the master of ceremonies; it creates cosmography; it counsels and corrects all the arts of mankind; it takes man to various parts of the world; it is the prince of mathematics; the sciences based on it are the most accurate; it has measured the distances and sizes of stars; it has discovered the elements and their location; it has made possible forecasting future events from the courses of stars; it has given birth to architecture and to perspective, and to the divine art of painting. . . .

But why all these lofty and lengthy deliberations? What is there that has not been done thanks to the eye? It guides man from East to West; it has invented navigation. It surpasses nature in so far as simple creations of nature are finite, and the works commanded by the eye to the hands are infinite as can be witnessed by the painter when inventing innumerable shapes of animals and plants, trees and landscapes.<sup>9</sup>

Leonardo da Vinci describes the immense power and positive value of the eye as an instrument of scientific discovery and artistic achievement. In Troilus and Cressida, the eye becomes a perverted instrument whose ability to gather and analyze sense data is transformed by the workings of minds themselves distorted by their military environment. Instead of being able to see and verify truth, the eye becomes entangled in its operation with the imagination and will in such a way that its function is rendered perverted if not impotent. For example, honor or glory becomes what can be seen by everyone else: what counts is the appearance of honor and glory. For the warrior, sight is the major





sense of appreciation of the battle experience. Heroic military action must be registered in the sight of others to be of value in creating a prestigious image. Ultimately, then, the warrior is tyrannized by the eye. However, this is not the same tyranny of the eye that Marshall McLuhan discusses. McLuhan sees the tyranny of the eye as a consequence of print culture: the book-conditioned eye, he says, habituates the mind to thinking in a linear and rational manner. He might say that da Vinci stresses the importance of the eye because he is a Renaissance theoretician enamored of "linear" thinking. But, for the warrior, the ear is more clearly linked with thinking because listening is associated with speaking and both require the logical patterned activity of the centers of reason. During the council scenes, nothing stimulates the eye, and the mind is forced reluctantly and ineptly into play. These ideas help to explain why the warriors in Troilus and Cressida are constantly concerned about acting and so frustrated by discussion. They are more suited for action which they "understand" visually; they do not "understand" the (vocal-aural) operations of reason which lead them away from action. Speculation, or the operation of seeing, becomes central for them.

Frye argues that the emphasis on visual appearance is central both in the theater itself and in the exercise of leadership as dramatized:

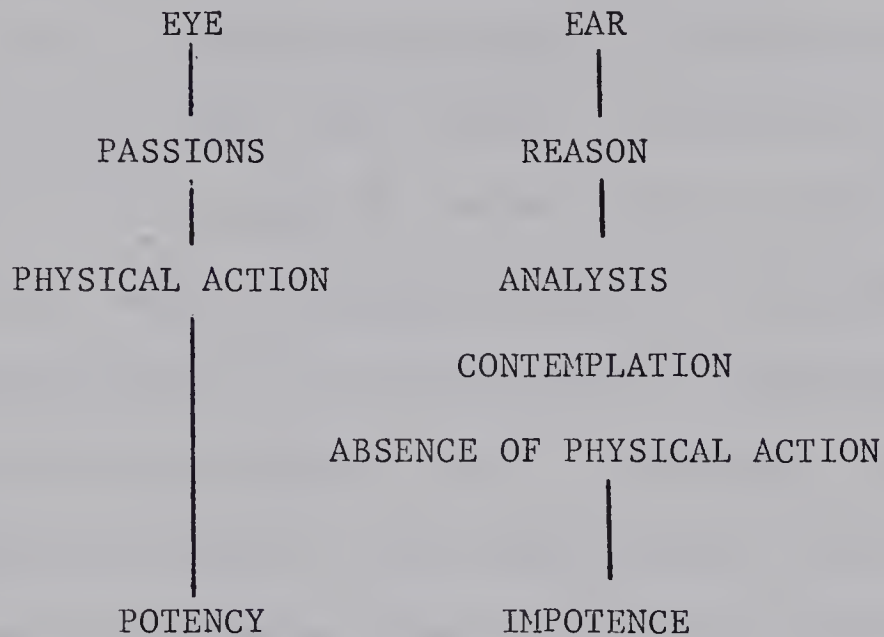
For the leader, there is no difference between reality and appearance, between what he is and what he seems to be. His reality is his appearance, and what he does is what he is. Machiavelli remarks that it is not important that a prince should be virtuous, only that he should



seem so. . . .

The prince is a dramatic figure: like the actor, he is required not so much to be as to appear, to put on a show. The conception of reputation in Shakespeare is bound up with the emphasis on appearance.<sup>10</sup>

What Shakespeare does in Troilus and Cressida is to consider this question of "appearance." The warrior's view of things can be diagrammatically represented as follows:



The clearest polarization of the military man would be Troilus himself who explicitly rejects the right half of the diagram. For this reason, when he is undone by his own observation of Cressida's betrayal of him, there is a sense of a nearly tragic experience in that he almost learns something about another view of life. Because most of the characters in this play are striving towards the heroic ideal, it is difficult to find a character who absolutely counterbalances Troilus. Helenus perhaps comes closest to being thoroughly opposed in theory to Troilus. Yet Helenus is involved in action. In another sense, Thersites is the clearest representative of the reasoned view because he rejects every-



thing in the warrior's world: even when the bastard Margelon tries to force him to fight, Thersites refuses. Thersites' mentality is totally unheroic; the label "coward" has no meaning for him. Thersites' view of life is distasteful; but the environment in which he dwells is distasteful, and his view of life constitutes a vigorous refusal to prettify that environment.

In the world of Troilus and Cressida, each person presents a certain kind of visual image which becomes a significant aspect of his personality. Much of the power of the individual is caught up in the power of the visual image he presents to others. For example, Agamemnon is visually unimpressive: he is not recognized by Aeneas when Aeneas comes to the Greek camp to deliver Hector's challenge. As the scene opens, both Ulysses and Nestor credit Agamemnon with the bearing of a prince. However, when Aeneas appears, our whole perception shifts from the oral to the visual. Aeneas asks:

May one that is a herald and a prince  
Do a fair message to his kingly eyes?  
(I, iii, 218-219)

The visual effect suddenly assumes precedence over the oral--Agamemnon does not appear to be a prince. His image is simply that of any soldier. Even his tent is not distinguished among the others. Aeneas asks: "Is this great Agamemnon's tent, I pray you?" (I, iii, 216). As the play continues, Shakespeare repeatedly shows us the significance of the long passage which acts as a prelude to the challenge. He constantly demonstrates the impotence of Agamemnon's image.





Achilles' visual image is the antithesis of Agamemnon's. The fact that Achilles' physique would be outstanding and immediately identifiable in a group of warriors is acknowledged by Hector who says to Ajax:

The worthiest of them tell me name by name;  
But for Achilles, my own searching eyes  
Shall find him by his large and portly size.  
(IV, v, 159-161)

Yet when Hector first speaks with Achilles, Hector begins by pretending that he does not recognize Achilles:

ACHILLES: I shall forestall thee, Lord Ulysses, thou!  
Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee;  
I have with exact view perused thee, Hector,  
And quoted joint by joint.

HECTOR: Is this Achilles?

ACHILLES: I am Achilles.  
(IV, v, 229-233)

A verbal battle ensues in which Hector vanquishes Achilles:

HECTOR: Stand fair, I pray thee; let me look on thee.

ACHILLES: Behold thy fill.

HECTOR: Nay, I have done already.  
(IV, v, 233-235)

Like the scene in which Agamemnon is shown to be unimpressive, this scene develops through emphasis on the visual. Hector insults Achilles' virility and his stature as a great warrior by suggesting that he is not worth looking at. His entire strength, Hector implies, can be assessed in a quick glance. Achilles does not know how to handle the insult and ineptly plays directly into Hector's hand:

ACHILLES: Thou art too brief. I will the second time





As I would buy thee, view thee limb by limb.

HECTOR: O, like a book of sport thou'll read me o'er;  
 But there's more in me than thou understand'st.  
 Why dost thou so oppress me with thine eye?  
 (IV, v, 236-240)

In another scene Achilles symbolically loses potency because other characters refuse to look at him carefully. Ulysses' scheme is to unseat Achilles' self-confidence and thus undermine his rebellion by having the Greek generals ignore him instead of pleading with him. The childishness of the technique is suited to Achilles' petulance. Having heard Ulysses' directions, Agamemnon begins and his cohorts follow suit:

AGAMEMNON: We'll execute your purpose, and put on  
 A form of strangeness as we pass along.  
 So do each lord, and either greet him not  
 Or else disdainfully, which shall shake him more  
 Than if not looked on. I will lead the way.

ACHILLES: What comes the general to speak with me?  
 You know my mind; I'll fight no more 'gainst Troy.

AGAMEMNON: What says Achilles? Would he aught with us?

NESTOR: Would you, my lord, aught with the general?

ACHILLES: No.

NESTOR: Nothing, my lord.

AGAMEMNON: The better.

ACHILLES: Good day, good day.

MENELAUS: How do you? How do you?

ACHILLES: What, does the cuckold scorn me?

AJAX: How now, Patroclus?

ACHILLES: Good morrow, Ajax.

AJAX: Ha?



ACHILLES: Good morrow.

AJAX: Ay, and good next day too. Exeunt.

ACHILLES: What mean these fellows?  
Know they not Achilles?

PATROCLUS: They pass by strangely. They were used to bend,  
To send their smiles before them to Achilles,  
To come as humbly as they used to creep  
To holy altars.

(III, iii, 50-74)

To be given only a passing glance and little or no verbal acknowledgement is to be symbolically castrated. That these men for whom Achilles has no respect can now snub him is both insulting and discouraging to him. Particularly grating is the snub of Ajax, because Ajax up to this point has been regarded as so inferior to Achilles. Achilles responds by saying:

What, am I poor of late?  
'Tis certain, greatness, once fall'n out with fortune,  
Must fall out with men too. What the declined is  
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others  
As feel in his own fall; for men, like butterflies,  
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,  
And not a man, for being simply man,  
Hath any honor, but honor for those honors  
That are without him, as place, riches, and favor,  
Prizes of accident as oft as merit;  
Which when they fall, as being slippery standers,  
The love that leaned on them as slippery too,  
Doth one pluck down another, and together  
Die in the fall. But 'tis not so with me;  
Fortune and I are friends. I do enjoy  
At ample point all that I did possess,  
Save these men's looks--who do, methinks, find out  
Something not worth in me such rich beholding  
As they have often given.

(III, iii, 74-92)

Achilles knows that in fact nothing has changed except the way in which men look at him. However, this in itself is very important to him; he



is accustomed to taking his opinion of himself from others. He says to Ulysses:

The beauty that is borne here in the face  
 The bearer knows not, but commends itself  
 To others' eyes; nor doth the eye itself,  
 That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,  
 Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed  
 Salutes each other with each other's form;  
 For speculation turns not to itself  
 Till it hath traveled and is married there  
 Where it may see itself.

(III, iii, 103-111)

This notion that the eye sees not itself but by reflection is advanced in Julius Caesar (I, ii, 52-53) during Cassius' attempts to manipulate Brutus. Here, Ulysses' scheme is effective because Achilles believes that without the interaction of two separate powers of sight which concur, the existence of sight itself is destroyed. Achilles does not possess the internal strength to formulate his perceptions in isolation from the mass of men.

The significance of the eye in connection with the love story will be considered in the next chapter. For the present, I want to indicate briefly how Matthew Proser deals with related ideas in connection with several Shakespeare plays. Proser is not concerned so much with the actual sense of sight, but he is concerned with the "heroic image" that certain characters have of themselves, and which they manage to convey or fail to convey to other characters. Proser treats Julius Caesar in which Brutus sees himself as a patriot, Macbeth in which Macbeth sees himself as a manly figure, Othello and Coriolanus in which the respective heroes see themselves as warriors, and Antony





and Cleopatra in which Antony sees himself as the complete hero, both soldier and lover. Proser says that in each case the result of the hero's attempt to enact an image is that:

the hero sacrifices his humanity and others' as well for the sake of a mental illusion, a heroic conception, which his own human nature ultimately defeats. Thus if the heroic image embodies the man's aspirations and dreams, and his sense of his own capacities, it also embodies the illusory quality of the nobility in the image.<sup>11</sup>

Proser's treatment of Macbeth is interesting for my purposes because he discusses Lady Macbeth's view that virtue is manliness. The manliness essential to her acceptance of Macbeth "demands action, direct, physical, and executed by the soldier-hero himself. Action means everything, verifies everything that Macbeth must have verified."<sup>12</sup> Proser explains in greater detail:

Lady Macbeth succeeds in separating valor from "justice" and establishing the former as a virtue in its own right. Her attempt to brand Macbeth's reticence as cowardice scorches the living center of his reality--his conception of himself as a valorous soldier. In self-defense he falls back upon her point of view. In fact, so emotional is his response that he continues to see himself, even when planning the crime, as Duncan and the other lords saw him after the battle with the treacherous Macdonwald and Cawdor. He envisions himself as a kind of hero. The murder becomes a "terrible feat," a great enterprise which can prove his manhood, now placed in doubt by Lady Macbeth--and it can gain the crown at the same time.<sup>13</sup>

As I have indicated, the warriors in Troilus and Cressida separate valor from justice, establish the former as the supreme virtue, and equate it with manliness.

What Proser has to say about Othello and Coriolanus is even more closely linked with what I have tried to say about the warrior during the course of this chapter. He talks about the kinds of char-



acters they are and contrasts them with highly reflective types like Brutus or Hamlet:

Their belief in themselves and their success on the battlefield may be construed, consequently, as factors in the kind of intellectual and emotional blindness they come to demonstrate. How Othello finally chooses to act upon the supposed infidelity of his wife [it is here interesting to note that he is concerned with getting ocular proof of his wife's infidelity just as Troilus gets of Cressida's infidelity], how Coriolanus chooses to act upon the problem of the consulship, becomes in each case a measure of their failure, not simply as soldiers, but as men. . . .For Othello and Coriolanus, action, warlike action, is the habit which fails to acknowledge other potential modes of being, and which therefore becomes a killing habit.

The approval Venice and Rome give to the active military roles of Othello and Coriolanus is perhaps a factor in their singular lack of introspection. It is as if their recognized distinction as soldiers and their necessity to the state have dislocated their self-criticizing faculties. This is less true of Othello than it is of Coriolanus, who is incapable of seeing himself as anything but a soldier, that is, in his public role. . . .Yet if Othello and Coriolanus are admired, if they admire themselves for their military abilities, this admiration comes at the expense of certain important internal powers. Their public selves are very much isolated from their personal ones. . . .The violent and destructive feelings of which they prove capable are hidden by the accepted military forms and tactics they use in defense of their respective countries. War is their fulfillment, not merely an occupation. This is not to say Shakespeare is criticizing soldiers per se, but rather the kind of mind which cannot penetrate the secret of its violence because it has gone rigid with self-approbation.<sup>14</sup>

Proser goes on to make two further points about Othello which relate to Troilus and Cressida. He says that it is at the expense of love that war is idealized. And he says that Othello's problem is his inability to "see" properly:

Othello's great limitation, then, like that of Brutus or Macbeth, [and most of the characters in Troilus and Cressida] is a habit of mind he comes to adopt. His fault lies in his way of "seeing" things, and as Heilman says, this manner of perception is associated with Iago's way of seeing things. According to this interpretation, Iago manages to impose upon Othello a point of view which accepts "facts" as proof of Desdemona's infidelity, but in a situation demanding not proofs but the delicacy of the instincts.<sup>15</sup>



The warrior in order to be successful must project an heroic image of himself to others. But this image affects not only other persons' behavior towards him, but his own behavior and perception. His reason becomes weakened and his will correspondingly stronger: thus his perception of events is coarse and his actions unfeelingly brutal. In the next chapter, I will consider the way in which the role of warrior affects an individual's private life and his love relationships.





#### IV

##### THE WARRIOR AS LOVER

Critics tend to see the love story in Troilus and Cressida as a separate plot inadequately developed because Shakespeare was more interested in the martial plot. Furthermore, Shakespeare is criticized for having linked the love story only very tenuously with the war story. Perhaps much of this criticism stems from comparing Shakespeare's treatment with Chaucer's more fully developed handling of the love story, rather than evaluating the play on its own merits.

I submit that the siege warfare plot is actually rather carefully linked with the love story. In Troilus and Cressida, as in real life, public deeds have an unrecognized but pervasive effect on private lives. The siege of Troy provides certain patterns of public conduct which tend to re-structure private conduct as well. Thus, the courtship of Cressida, although Troilus does not seem aware of the fact, is conducted by him as a siege. In a war environment it is natural for Troilus to think of love as another form of conquest. The woman has the task of holding the wall of virginity as long as possible. The man's strategy is to use whatever means are available to apply pressure to the wall. Pandarus functions as the device to apply pressure against the wall--he is a kind of Trojan horse effecting destruction from





within.

In ordinary circumstances, Cressida, who is only seventeen in Shakespeare's play, would have had the protection of her family. But in a war situation the bonds of the family are slackened. Pandarus, who should be her protector, is instead the manipulator of the love plot just as Ulysses is the manipulator of the war plot. (It is noteworthy that at the scene of the betrayal, Ulysses takes Pandarus' place as Troilus' confidant. Shakespeare would seem to be indicating that Troilus has previously seen Cressida from one point of view, a sentimentally lecherous one, and is now seeing her from another, a cynical, misogynous one.) Pandarus is a false servant to both young lovers. He aids Troilus' Machiavellian efforts to obtain satisfaction of his appetite through enjoyment of Cressida's body. By carefully whetting Cressida's appetite for sex, he ensures her cooperation. Finally, it is he who manipulates--in the sense of almost strong-arming--the pair of rather hesitant young lovers into bed. Like the warriors in the martial plot, the lovers are much more inclined to talk than to act. Pandarus, like Ulysses in the martial plot, functions as a kind of catalyst to try to get the action going.

In another world, Troilus might not have victimized Cressida; but in a Troy where Paris' adulterous relationship with Helen is seen as a model relationship, his perceptions are distorted. Troilus does not seek a wife, but a conquest. Cressida becomes one of the challenges that the young knight takes on and must overcome in order to attain his



manhood. Essentially he offers her not a mature love, but simple sexual appetite. Part of him has an awareness of deeper modes of feeling. Thus he speaks to Cressida of eternal fidelity, as if their love were sacred. But he himself has rejected the possibility of a sacred relationship--marriage--in favor of a furtive, illicit one which he wishes to conceal from Hector and his father.

Troilus' love for Cressida is paired with Paris' love for Helen in the imagery of the play. Imagery of death is found in the pre-seduction passages as it is in the death-coitus song that Pandarus sings for Helen and Paris. Troilus constantly uses sensual imagery. He wants to "wallow in the lily beds/ Proposed for the deserver" (III, ii, 8-9); the imagery here is visually reminiscent of Paris' and Helen's lolling in bed while Pandarus tries to arrange Troilus' excuses. The suggestion that Paris will be cuckolded also pairs him with Troilus, as it pairs them both with Menelaus. The play comes to be about lovers' achievements that mock them. L. C. Knights finds Traversi's statement about the love imagery in the play quite important. Traversi says it conveys simultaneously "an impression of intense feeling and an underlying lack of content."<sup>1</sup> No more appropriate imagery could be chosen to represent a warrior's love.

A consideration of the scene in which Cressida is seduced tells a great deal about Troilus as a lover. As he waits for Cressida, he begins to be consumed by fears. He says:

I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.  
Th' imaginary relish is so sweet



That it enchants my sense. What will it be  
 When that the wat'ry palates taste indeed  
 Love's thrice-repured nectar? Death, I fear me,  
 Sounding destruction, or some joy too fine,  
 Too subtle, potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness  
 For the capacity of my ruder powers.  
 I fear it much; and I do fear besides  
 That I shall lose distinction in my joys,  
 As doth a battle, when they charge on heaps  
 The enemy flying.

(III, ii, 17-28)

This statement brings together several threads of the potency-impotence theme at a crucial point in the play. Troilus' fears about impending intercourse with Cressida can be seen as the normal fears about potency which would besiege the inexperienced lover. But Troilus with his usual capacity for exaggeration turns his fears into swooning destruction. He is afraid that the experience of love will prove too potent for his "ruder powers." His powers are rude because he is a warrior, a product of the battle-field where he gains power over another man to prove his manhood. The warrior is not adept at the "niceties" of the love situation, as Henry V explains to Katherine when he describes himself as a plain rude soldier simply seeking a wife who can bear him strong soldiers. But entering into a relationship with Cressida may destroy Troilus as a soldier; he may become like Paris, rather than like Hector. Paris "besotted in his sweet delights" is the warrior consumed by lust. No longer is he a first-rate warrior; love has sapped his manliness. Paris concedes this point himself in admitting that, "I fain would have armed today, but my Nell would not have it so." This development Troilus fears. He also fears that if Cressida is too easy a victory,





he will gain no distinction (no honor) from the conquest.

Later in the scene, Troilus says:

Even such a passion doth embrace my bosom,  
My heart beats thicker than a feverous pulse,  
And all my powers do their bestowing lose,  
Like vassalage at unawares encount'ring  
The eye of majesty.

(III, ii, 35-39)

Here, Troilus states quite explicitly that he feels his potency slipping away. He suggests that his powers are losing their bestowing like vassals unexpectedly encountering a king. Thus, degree is shaken in his own body (by his passions) and the lower members lose their ability to function in accordance with the appropriate assignment of roles. The passions--the warring humours--assume control and the body loses its ability to take reasoned action. It is significant that for the impassioned lover, will reduces his body to chaos in the same way as acts of will reduce the body politic of Troy to a state of chaos.

A final important point in connection with this particular scene concerns the way in which "love" is spoken of. There is no suggestion by any of the participants of a "marriage of true minds" or any kind of deep or complex relationship. In this environment all that is of consequence is the sex act. And the sex act becomes not an act of love, but an act of skill. The militaristic environment causes a stress on performance both in battle and in bed. In other words, the objective rather than the subjective components are what counts in a lustful society. Pandarus' speeches show how important action is:



So, so; rub on, and kiss the mistress. How now, a kiss in fee-farm! Build there, carpenter; the air is sweet. Nay, you shall fight your hearts out ere I part you. The falcon as the tercel, for all the ducks i' the river. Go to, go to. . . .Words pay no debts, give her deeds; but she'll bereave you o' the deeds too if she call your activity in question.

(III, ii, 49-58)

Even Cressida does not hesitate to emphasize performance when speaking to Troilus:

TROILUS: This is the monstrosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit.

CRESSIDA: They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform, vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one. They that have the voice of lions and the act of hares--are they not monsters?

TROILUS: Are there such? Such are not we. Praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove; our head shall go bare till merit crown it. No perfection in reversion shall have a praise in present; we will not name desert before his birth, and, being born, his addition shall be humble.

(III, ii, 82-97)

When Cressida suggests that some men perform less well than they say they can, Troilus is anxious to point out that she can judge his standing after his performance.

Like Troilus', Cressida's ability to understand her world or herself has been clouded by her environment. Jan Kott sees her as the equivalent of the teenager of the mid-twentieth century who is cast in a bitter, cynical role. Distrusting this role and not knowing



herself, she becomes easy prey. Furthermore, she lives in a society in which there are no worthy objects to be attained. The woman has no role other than whore, so she becomes a chattel, a shell without substance like the warrior in his suit of armor.

Throughout the play Cressida is compared to and imitates Helen. Thus Cressida's model is not a worthy ideal, but a perversion of the ideal. Helen has distorted Troy's whole notion of womanhood. She has been elevated by the Trojans into an ideal of beauty and honor. As a king's honor is demonstrated by the loyalty of thousands of vassals and as God's glory is shown by the loyalty of thousands of angels, so Helen's honor is demonstrated by the thousands of ships she has caused to be launched and the thousands of lives she has taken as her price. But Helen is not really honorable, as both Thersites and Diomed are quick to point out; she is cheaply lecherous. In identifying herself with Helen, Cressida becomes a flirt and a wanton. Like Helen, she symbolically castrates her man, causing him to seek revenge in order symbolically to regain his lost sexual potency. It is significant, in this context, that Cressida and her father sup in the tent of Menelaus, Helen's husband, after Cressida has been ceded to the Greeks; for Cressida, when she arrives in the Greek camp, assumes the role vacated by Helen.

Like both Pandarus and Troilus, Cressida is a manipulator in the love affair. Both manipulator and manipulated, she is the besieged city attempting to determine precisely when it should fall. By





manipulating her own seduction, Cressida hopes to obtain a position of power in this love war. Playing the role of cruel mistress, Cressida concentrates on building up her worth in Troilus' eyes by concealing her own love for him: "though my heart's content firm love doth bear,/ Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear" (I, ii, 306-307). In a Machiavellian love environment, concealment is the watchword. But in this Cressida consistently fails. Knowing that if she should "confess much . . . [Troilus] will play the tyrant," she exposes her feelings. She becomes openly linked with Troilus thereby sacrificing her reputation, openly flirtatious with the Greek generals, and finally openly unfaithful to Troilus while being watched by three observers.

In assuming an unworthy role, Cressida proves that she is weak; and this weakness is her main character fault. There is no reason to attribute to her the greater fault of insincerity. Her initial affection, as expressed in these lines, seems genuine:

Boldness comes to me now, and brings me heart.  
 Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day  
 For many weary months.

(III, iii, 123-125)

But even in this scene, where she yields her person to Troilus without sufficient regard for the consequences, we can see in her a fatal lack of self-control. In peacetime, she might have remained faithful to Troilus, but war is a situation which "tempts the frailty of our powers." The war separates the two lovers and Cressida adapts to her new circumstances all too well. The permissive atmosphere of the Greek camp brings out aspects of her personality which might not otherwise have





emerged. In her rendezvous with Diomedes, which Troilus witnesses from a distance, we see her flirtatiousness and turpitude. We can also see a quite genuine, though weakening, reluctance to betray Troilus:

O, all you gods! O pretty, pretty pledge!  
 Thy master now lies thinking on his bed  
 Of thee and me, and sighs, and takes my glove,  
 And gives memorial dainty kisses to it,  
 As I kiss thee. Nay, do not snatch it from me;  
 He that takes that doth take my heart withal.  
 (V, ii, 74-79)

Unfortunately, as she says, "The error of her eye directs . . . [her] mind"; she is unable to resist the temptations of the moment.

Lionel Abel says that, "Metatheatre gives by far the stronger sense [than tragedy] that the world is a projection of human consciousness."<sup>2</sup> Troilus tries to make his world into a metatheatrical one. He wants things to have the value that he assigns to them, and he wants people to do only things which he believes them capable of. Because Helen and Cressida are externally beautiful, Troilus naively attributes to them inner beauty and worth. But Cressida proceeds to show what she is really worth. When she greets the Greek generals, she gives a visual indication of her own worth by kissing all the generals. She mocks both Agamemnon and Menelaus--Agamemnon by denying his privilege as leader and kissing everyone; Menelaus by asserting his impotence as cuckold and refusing to kiss him. Ulysses says that Cressida's behavior identifies her as a "daughter of the game." He says that "there's language in her eye"--a language which Troilus has refused up to this time to see.

The betrayal scene is staged by Shakespeare in a way in which



no other play about the Troy story shows it. That Shakespeare is stressing the importance of the visual is evident from the fact that he has Troilus see Cressida's betrayal and has both Ulysses and Thersites witness the scene. Through the treatment of Menelaus during the course of the play, it is evident that all the characters consider the cuckold an impotent figure. Now Troilus sees himself cuckolded. In doing so, he faces a collision of the world as he projects it and the world as it is. At first he is unable to believe his eyes; but Ulysses will not permit him to regard the scene as a delusion:

TROILUS: But if I tell how these two did coact,  
 Shall I not lie in publishing a truth?  
 Sith yet there is a credence in my heart,  
 An esperance so obstinately strong,  
 That doth invert th' attest of eyes and ears,  
 As if those organs had deceptious functions,  
 Created only to calumniate.  
 Was Cressid here?

ULYSSES: I cannot conjure, Trojan.

TROILUS: She was not, sure.

ULYSSES: Most sure she was.

TROILUS: Why, my negation hath no taste of madness.

ULYSSES: Nor mine, my lord. Cressid was here but now.

TROILUS: Let it not be believed for womanhood!  
 (V, ii, 115-126)

Subsequently, Troilus tries to project two Cressidas--the one he has seen previously and the one he sees now--each with a different value. "This is and is not, Cressid," (V, ii, 143) he says. He could not accept the hiatus between what she has seemed to be and what she has



become without fighting and winning a battle in his own soul:

TROILUS: Within my soul there doth conduce a fight  
Of this strange nature that a thing inseparate  
Divides more wider than the sky and earth. . . .  
(V, ii, 144-146)

Troilus must accept the way in which life falsifies our expectations. But again the environment exercises a determining influence over the individual. The war of external aggression weakens the individual's ability to fight the true war, the war with the self. Thus Troilus arrives at no mature acceptance of the human condition. Instead, he takes the easy way out by diverting his aggressiveness outward; he turns his love for Cressida into hatred and blame for Diomedes and the Greeks. At the end of the play we see Troilus bitter and pitiless, still crying for vengeance upon the Greeks. He who disarmed at the beginning of the play, in the hope of attaining fruition through love, has once again donned his armor, both internal and external. His capacity for love and for insight lost, he has become an embodiment of the impotent violence of his environment.





## FOOTNOTES

### 1. "Troilus and Cressida" as an Exploration of Militarism

<sup>1</sup>Fergusson, ed., Laurel edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 8.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, Lion and Fox, 259.

<sup>3</sup>Goodwin, Royal Shakespeare Company Programme, n.p.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ellis-Fermor, Frontiers of Drama, 59.

<sup>8</sup>Beckerman, ed., Festival edition of "Troilus and Cressida",  
20.

<sup>9</sup>Empson, Some Versions, 34.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>11</sup>All references to Troilus and Cressida are to the Signet edition edited by Daniel Seltzer. All references to other works by Shakespeare are to the Complete Works edited by Neilson and Hill.

<sup>12</sup>Seltzer, ed., Signet edition of "Troilus and Cressida",  
xxxix.

<sup>13</sup>Blackmur in Fergusson, ed., Laurel edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 24.

<sup>14</sup>Goodwin, ed., Royal Shakespeare Company Programme, n.p.

<sup>15</sup>Traversi in Seltzer, ed., Signet edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 227.

<sup>16</sup>Richards in Fergusson, ed., Laurel edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 29.

<sup>17</sup>Seltzer, ed., Signet edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 17.



<sup>18</sup>Beckerman, ed., Festival Shakespeare, 20.

<sup>19</sup>Goodwin, ed., Royal Shakespeare Company Programme, n.p.

<sup>20</sup>Seltzer, ed., Signet edition of "Troilus and Cressida",  
xxviii.

<sup>21</sup>Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 175.

<sup>22</sup>Brown, Love's Body, 180-182.

<sup>23</sup>Blackmur in Fergusson, ed., Laurel edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 23.

## 2. The Head Versus the Hand: the Problem of Leadership

<sup>1</sup>Weston, From Ritual to Romance, 19.

<sup>2</sup>Homer, Rieu translation of The Iliad, 26.

<sup>3</sup>Tillyard, Elizabethan World Picture, 19-20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>5</sup>Elton, "Professor Tillyard's Tabula Rasa", Shakespeare Newsletter, XVIII, 40.

<sup>6</sup>Brown, Love's Body, 133-134.

<sup>7</sup>Empson, Some Versions, 38.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>9</sup>Tillyard, Elizabethan World Picture, 48 49.

<sup>10</sup>Kimbrough, "Troilus and Cressida" and Its Setting, 113.

<sup>11</sup>Machiavelli, Musa translation of The Prince, 121.

<sup>12</sup>Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance, 426-427.

<sup>13</sup>Abel, Metatheatre, vii.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 113.



<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 50-51.

### 3. The Hand Triumphant Over the Head: the Mentality of the Warrior

<sup>1</sup>Raleigh, "Introduction to Troilus and Cressida", Complete Works of Shakespeare, n.p.

<sup>2</sup>The word "arm" occurs fifteen times in the play, sometimes in its bodily and sometimes in its military sense. In several instances, the word is punned upon and carries both senses. "Armed" occurs eight times; "arming" occurs three times; "unarm" occurs six times and, interestingly enough, occurs only once (in Antony and Cleopatra) outside Troilus and Cressida; "unarmed" occurs five times; "disarm" occurs once; "armies" occurs once; "army" occurs twice. "Armour" is used three times; "armourer" is used once; "suit" is used once; "suited" is used once in the prologue. "Weapon" is used once; "sword" is used twenty-two times; "lance" is used once. "War" is used nineteen times; "warlike" is used twice; "warrior/s" is used twice; and "battle" is used six times.

<sup>3</sup>In connection with the above quotation (V, viii, 1-2), Bethell makes the following remarks: "Shakespeare took the incident of the 'one in sumptuous armor' from Lydgate's Troye Boke, but seems to have given it a wider significance. The crucial question here is, 'Why putrefied core?' There is nothing in Lydgate to explain this remarkable apostrophe. What did Shakespeare intend by it? The 'one in sumptuous armor' was surely not dead when he first entered, and he had no time to putrefy after being killed. Or does it mean that he was old, or diseased, or infirm? In any event, Hector had won the armor which he coveted, so why this apparently embittered comment? I do not see any naturalistic explanation. What I suggest is that Shakespeare saw in the incident in Lydgate an allegory similar to the 'whited sepulcher' of Holy Scripture: 'a sumptuous armor' stands for the 'outward show' which covers an inner corruption. . . . The 'sumptuous armor' with its 'putrefied core' thus becomes a symbol of all the play presents to us, an allegorical enactment of the theme of 'fair without, and foul within,' which is applicable almost everywhere in the Troy and Troilus stories as Shakespeare rewrites them. It applies to the war, with its false chivalry and its inadequate aim; to Helen, to Cressida, and a good many more of the personages involved; and it applies, lastly, to the death of Hector, with which it is so closely linked in presentation. Hector was the best of the Trojans, and better than the best of the Greeks; he saw, most clearly of them all, the essential evil of the war, waged to keep Helen from her lawful husband. . . ." from Seltzer, ed., Signet edition of "Troilus and Cressida", 235-236.



- <sup>4</sup>Proser, Heroic Image, 147.
- <sup>5</sup>Frye, Fools of Time, 61.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 83-84.
- <sup>7</sup>Knight, Wheel of Fire, 55.
- <sup>8</sup>Lewis, Allegory of Love, 33.
- <sup>9</sup>Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 261.
- <sup>10</sup>Frye, Fools of Time, 130.
- <sup>11</sup>Proser, Heroic Image, 4.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., 63.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., 59.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., 93-94.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., 111.

#### 4. The Warrior as Lover

- <sup>1</sup>Traversi in Knights, Some Shakespearean Themes, 66-67.
- <sup>2</sup>Abel, Metatheatre, 113.





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